Women in Manitoba History

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FIRST DAYS, FIGHTING DAYS

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Women in Manitoba History

Edited by Mary Kinnear

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Introduction

Mary Kinnear

The last two hundred years have seen dramatic social and economic changes which have seriously affected women as well as men, but in different ways. There have also been intriguing continuities. Women in Manitoba offer a case study of the general theme prevalent in western industrialised nations, but this particular theme is ornamented by the coincidence of several factors uniquely contributing to their own experience. Manitoba in 1780 was included in the fur-trading empire of western European nations but still followed an ancient hunter-gatherer way of life. By 1980 industrialisation of both manufacturing and agriculture had irredeemably altered the social structure. In 1780 the population of the area was counted in thousands. There were few white men and no white women. Two hundred years later over one million people lived in the province and their ethnic origins were diverse. At both dates there were separate spheres for men and women, orbs which have been drifting both nearer and farther apart, frequently overlapping but rarely offering identical lifestyles to both sexes. The particular reaction of people and resources in Manitoba with their environment over time has resulted in a history indicative of both general and individual gains and losses, changes for the better and for the worse. This particular collection examines how women have been involved in these momentous shifts.

A social history of women in Manitoba may be seen against several backgrounds. There is the political history of Canada, and of the prairie provinces. Whilst women were disfranchised until 1916, and could not formally participate in the political process, nevertheless political decisions of various kinds affected them. There is also the history of industrialisation and its concomitant urbanisation and modernisation. In western Canada, a local development intimately involved both with the politics and economics of the late nineteenth century was immigration, and any social history must also take that into account. If these furnish a context for women's history, what can we discover about women's experience, and how do we achieve our objectives?

If our goal is to identify the women and their activities, and then to understand their own views of their lives and circumstances, we must examine a variety of evidence. Ideally, we would have

comparable data from the beginning of the period to the end. Census statistics would analyse the demographic condition of our population group, and we would have comparable rates chronicling changes in births, marriages, and deaths over time. We would know how women spent their time in various forms of economic activity, and we would be able to contrast this with men's experience. Moreover, we would be able to compare the experience of one smaller group of women with another: of Mennonite women in the 1890s, for example, with Mennonite women in the 1980s, and yet again with French-Canadian women at another point in time. Then, ideally, we would have reliable public opinion polls lifting the veil over women's views on a wide spectrum of issues, and thereby have access to some direct evidence on mentality. And we would sample women's creative work, their poetry, novels, stories, as well as letters and reminiscences, in order to see indirectly what their mentality was. We shall probably never have enough of the most appropriate evidence to generate a longitudinal analysis of provincial society over a long period. Nevertheless, we cannot be satisfied by the prudent social scientist who points out that we can never know for sure the answers to our questions. Accepting the limits of our available evidence, we examine what is there.

What is the evidence available? For the parts describing identity and activity, aggregated statistics provide the preferred data base. Without this source, it is very easy for the historian to be diverted by an articulate, interesting and well-written diary or family history which has a single storyteller at its centre. This was the world as it looked from one person's perspective. How can we know that this interpretation was shared by others? Such subjective, "qualitative" data may indeed enrich our account. They can clothe our conceptual frames with the flesh and blood and clothing of real people. But we need first to construct our skeletons as objectively as possible. If we want to know who the women were, we must look at numbers: how many? what sort? what was their background? where did they come from, literally and metaphorically? One of the advantages of examining women in Manitoba is the wealth of statistical evidence that is available. Before Manitoba entered Confederation in 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company kept quite full records of the population served by the Company in Red River; the churches also kept records. In neither case were they as comprehensive nor as accurate as government-engendered statistics, but they are a more than satisfactory substitute for the occasional personal history. These statistics can yield group histories.

There are of course problems. The facts that were gathered with great care by the Hudson's Bay Company, and by the churches, were not nearly as wide-ranging as a contemporary social historian would like to see. Moreover, we cannot always be sure that the "facts" are as objective or as complete as we infer. For example, church records note baptisms. But this is not the same as births. It is very likely that some children were born who were not baptised. Moreover, the date of baptism was not always directly related to the date of birth. In the 1830s, for instance, there are dramatic entries where a woman is baptised, along with her several children, and then these ceremonies culminate in her own wedding. The explanation of this topsy-turvy ritual is relatively straightforward. Many of the fur trade employees were married according to the custom of the country to native-born women, without benefit of clergy or church. When clergy arrived in Red River, some of these stable families wished to take advantage of ecclesiastical approval, and underwent baptism and marriage all at the same time. Another example of the need for interpretation arises in the Company censuses. They show women as part of families but rarely as individuals, and do not record, for instance, ages. Women are seen as part of the appurtenances of the male head of household. And in the government censuses, and other collections of government statistics, much data which would be now considered valuable went uncollected. Furthermore, the statistics that were collated must now be treated with care. With all these caveats, statistical structural analysis nevertheless has a great advantage. It can overcome the built-in bias towards generalising from a minority experience displayed by the written literary evidence. When once we have a due sense of proportion, of the relative numbers of women and men, of the relative number of different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups, then we can construct our skeleton. Following that, we can introduce some lively descriptions, knowing more about the context and thus a little more able to assess how egocentric (and ethnocentric) the writer may be.

For information on people's behaviour and mentality, we turn to "qualitative" source material. If we wish to discover what women thought about the place of women in society, we have to dig and delve among direct and indirect comments in private letters and journals and among the occasional published article and novel. Artifacts and visual art can help us. This kind of evidence must of necessity be impressionistic and is of course subject to the kind of criticism implicitly levelled against it earlier. How do we know how "typical" an experience is? How do we know how

representative a writer is? These are not easy questions to answer. Having some knowledge of the social and cultural context, however, can enhance our appreciation of individual testimonies.

The first chapter evaluates one particular sort of evidence with respect to women's experience. "Material history" studies the machines, tools, implements, and products which women used in the past. In the hands of a skilled interpreter, such artifacts can reveal an immense amount about the weekly workload of women who worked either for wages or domestically without pay. Well-worn clichés are occasionally undermined. The new household technology, introduced early in the twentieth century to Manitoba, in laundering, heating, cleaning, and food processing, "instead of decreasing the amount of labour ... increased it" for the housewife. Sharon Reilly points out that artifactual evidence can provide both an important alternative perspective on the past and can also offer information otherwise unavailable, especially concerning groups of women who left little literary evidence behind them as a clue to their experience. She raises a significant theoretical issue which, implicitly or explicitly, informs all the chapters of this book. What matters are to be considered historically important? relevant? relevant for whom? What is history? And, this in the context of a quilt, its design, construction and function, what is art? The values of our present society, as well as those of the past, are reflected in the questions we ask, the sort of evidence we select, and the way we make interpretations. Questions of class and ethnicity as well as gender divided the Manitoba population and are developed by the twelve historians represented in this collection.

Jennifer Brown's chapter comparing the child rearing practices of a Methodist mission family with its Cree nurse affords an insight into two cultures and their interaction in the middle of the nineteenth century. Brown's topic is the lifelong influence of "Little Mary" on her charge, Eddie, by her particular kind of mediation of native-white intercultural conflict, but we also learn about the place of women in Northern Algonquian societies. We learn too of the adult models, in stories and real life, presented to Eddie, who at the end of his life as a United Church minister recorded his reminiscences in two remarkable documents. With great sensitivity Brown places these autobiographies in their appropriate historical and anthropological context. Nor do we lose sight of the personal drama of a little white boy being raised virtually as a Cree, so much so that when his family moved away from Little Mary, Eddie's schoolmates "would point their fingers and say Indian, Indian." His training had an immediate short-

term effect. When the school children were beaten for misdeeds, it seemed to Eddie "that the other fellows cried very easily, they didn't have a Little Mary to train them." Eddie simply suffered his blows from the "lady teacher," then "looked her in the face. So she gave me eight more and still I looked at her, perhaps a little defiantly or scornfully as I remembered Little Mary." Long-term benefits were less physically painful. Brown uses her evidence to draw attention to the current state of missionary historiography and suggests that the historian must be aware of many more dimensions of racial and cultural interaction.

The next two chapters, on Francis Beynon and prairie presswomen, highlight the extraordinary group of women journalists in Manitoba and the other western provinces in the early decades of the twentieth century. Francis Beynon (her name was deliberately spelt in the masculine way) was the daughter of Methodist immigrants from Ontario. She trained initially as a schoolteacher, and on moving to Winnipeg in 1908 worked in the advertising department of the T. Eaton Company before becoming the first full-time women's editor, 1912-17, of *The Grain Growers' Guide*. Anne Hicks looks beyond Beynon's journalism and examines the intellectual and emotional turmoil of Manitoba feminism at the time of World War I through Beynon's novel *Aleta Day*. Autobiographical in tone, the novel was published in 1919. Its protagonist was a pacifist and a radical social reformer whose activism before the war led to women's suffrage and support for a dower law, homesteading rights for women, and labour-saving devices for the household. Beynon's own pacifism inspired her to split with other feminist friends and colleagues, but her own propaganda power, as a weekly columnist for a farm publication reaching over seventy thousand subscribers by the end of the war, was considerable.

Susan Jackel's chapter places the individual achievements of Francis Beynon and the hundred or so other women writers and journalists in the prairie provinces between 1904 and 1920 in a general political and social perspective. Jackel is engaged in a long-term study of the links between these writers and social reform. She is examining the activities and ideas of women in prairie journalism between 1880 and the late 1920s, and this study will be a valuable contribution to the history of ideas within the women's movement in Canada, an intellectual dimension left unexplored in much historiography on the topic. Drawing on the manuscript records of the Canadian Women's Press Club, and the personal papers of participants — who as professional writers were totally untypical of the mass of women in their literacy — Jackel

also uses the copy they wrote for the newspapers, magazines and other works to describe and analyse their attitudes to reform. Jackel is already able to form hypotheses concerning reform leadership and organisation, and the consciousness of these women. Their own mentality map, and that of their readers, is being tentatively drawn.

Jackel's "First Days, Fighting Days" can properly be understood only against the background of the economic conditions directly affecting women about the time of World War I. Linda Kealey examines the women who were in the paid labour force at that time and focusses particularly on the circumstances leading, in 1918, to the establishment of minimum wage legislation in Manitoba. Most of the province's wage-earning women were concentrated in Winnipeg. Then, as indeed sixty-five years later, three-quarters of the female labour force worked in service, clerical, or retail jobs, while another tenth worked in manufacturing, mainly the needle trades. Jurisdictions which already had established to some extent minimum wage laws included New Zealand, Australia, some American states, and Great Britain. Kealey analyses the support for this form of protective legislation and shows that in Manitoba, as elsewhere, the labour movement, and at first the Women's Labour League were in favour, as were liberal humanitarian activists, the liberal reform government, and many employers. She points out the underlying assumption that woman's role should be primarily domestic and reproductive and also shows the inherent tension between a market economy and a structure permitting, indeed requiring, state intervention. The provision of a living wage, a "social minimum," presumed a transitory, single woman worker whose ultimate destiny was marriage and child rearing. Kealey shows that the mechanism of employer-employee-government boards involved the participation of working class representatives in a mechanism designed to defuse class conflict — by reducing labour unrest and the attraction of unionisation — and gender conflict — by deterring women from entering the jobs, and the unions, dominated by men.

Domestic service between 1896 and 1930 remained one of the major occupations of women who had to make their own living. Marilyn Barber's chapter develops further the use of modern historical techniques identified in Reilly's paper, and uses to great effect oral history interviews with former servants. The servant "problem" from the employers' point of view concerned a limited supply and normally non-existent training. From the servants' perspective, the problem was the job itself: long hours, low pay,

unwelcome intimacy in the household. Programmes designed to promote immigration of single women from Europe were developed and several training schemes, some organised on a religious or ethnic basis and others of a non-denominational character, were devised. Feminists and women journalists highlighted both views of the problem, but were more concerned with the employers' than the servants' point of view. After World War II, outside the scope of this chapter, came the final solution. Alternative employment opportunities and reduced demand for domestic servants made service, certainly live-in service, a feature of the past — one of the distinguishing hallmarks of difference between the world we have lost and modern society.

Another institution of formerly great significance for women was organised religion. Nancy Hall's chapter draws attention to the way two major Protestant churches, the Presbyterian and Methodist, which in 1925 became the United Church of Canada, mobilised their female workers during the period 1900-40. At the earlier date, laywomen continued their already well-rooted support for missionary work, and were beginning to develop aspects of a female ministry in a deaconess order. Originally unpaid, but trained, deaconesses attempted to integrate social work with a redemptive mission. Frequently they were also reforming activists. Dedicated single women, they generally came from ministerial families. Hall shows they suffered as much from their lack of official church recognition as from lack of financial remuneration, and her theme is how the women workers gradually changed into paid and respected professionals — a progress accompanied by the secularisation of much of their caring and compassion. This model, of women breaking out of the domestic sphere and into the public, doing work for money which was formerly performed ostensibly for love, could be described as a major theme of women's activity in the twentieth century. So much of the actual work which women do in the 1980s, both productive and reproductive, is parallel to what they did one hundred, even two hundred years previously. What has changed is the economic base of society and normative expectations of social and financial reward. There are of course many contemporary reformers who consider such change has proceeded neither as completely nor as swiftly as it should.

The last two chapters, on workers in the Winnipeg garment industry, provide useful counterpoint to claims of advancement in women's working conditions in the formal labour market. Both pieces draw richly on oral testimony. In the 1930s and then again a generation later, women greatly outnumbered men in the needle

trades, a continuity indeed which stretches back into medieval times. At both periods new immigrants gravitated towards the clothing factories, which offered, to the eyes of some, a preferable alternative to domestic service for women with poor command of English. Severely undercapitalised, the industry used cheap labour to compensate for technological backwardness. Jim Mochoruk and Donna Webber describe the appalling physical working conditions, little changed from Nellie McClung's famous visit in 1912 to factories with Premier Rodmond Roblin in tow, a story told in her autobiography *The Stream Runs Fast* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Limited, 1945).

> We conducted the Premier down dark, slippery stairs to an airless basement where light in mid-day came from gaunt light bulbs, hanging from smoky ceilings. The floor was littered with refuse of apple peelings and discarded clothing. There was no ventilation and no heat. The room was full of untidy women, operating sewing machines and equally unattractive men cutting out garments on long tables . . . [Sir Rodmond] was shocked at the filth of the place, and asked one of the women if anybody ever swept the floor. He had to shout to drown the sound of the machines. The woman shook her head and kept on working. Then we reminded him that all these people were on piece work. (Pp. 103-4)

Mochoruk and Webber examine union activity in the period 1930-45 but credit market forces, and the demands of wartime production, with what improvements there were. Nor do the authors mince words in describing the sexism of the two major unions or the desperate strategies adopted by individual women in their attempts, through private deals with employers, to maintain their meagre standard of living.

The final chapter, by Barbara Roberts, David Millar and Annalee Lepp, is part of an ambitious project examining the origins and developments of the Winnipeg garment industry, 1950-80. The authors have abstracted from the larger work information and themes cataloguing the experience of the women workers, and place this largely oral testimony in the context of the often difficult economic imperatives known by many factory owners. Roberts, Millar and Lepp particularly emphasise the part played by state intervention, in the form of visible and hidden subsidies to owners, and the way the unions became "silent partners" with the employers in maintaining a relatively strike-free industry at the cost of low wages and poor working conditions for the workers, mainly women and first generation immigrants. A change from the 1930s was the introduction of more sophisticated machinery and marketing methods; also, more foreign competi-

tion altered the conditions of production and these developments all made their impact on the factory floor. Indeed, there was improvement, and the worst sweatshop conditions were eliminated. Nevertheless, pay increased barely "above welfare levels" and the authors vividly recreate the implications of poverty and low status through the medium of carefully selected interviews.

Contributors to this collection show in their work aspects of the new women's history. They chronicle and explain the lives not of women worthies but of ordinary people. They emphasise more what women did and thought, and the sense they made of their lives, and less what women suffered as victims. The authors are concerned to understand women's experience in the past from the perspective of those women, and this involves a tremendous effort of imagination as well as the generation of what for historians are relatively new techniques and methods. With respect to methodology, we find in this volume generous use of oral history and a description of the possibilities of material history and artifactual resources. Use is also made of statistics, mainly in the census and other government reports. Future historians will be able to make more intensive statistical analyses. These resources can amplify and augment the more traditional literary resource materials which obviously could be left only by people with a certain level of literacy. Diaries, letters, articles, and creative works of art retain their high level of importance especially in the historians' efforts to comprehend the mind-set, the mentality, of women in the past. We must understand not only why and how a woman wished to break through the limits enclosing her sphere, we must also learn how she expanded, evaded, and coped with those limits too. Resistance and acceptance are both aspects of human existence. Historians of women in Manitoba are exploring the boundaries of both.

Material History and the History of Women

Sharon Reilly

In recent years, research into the history of women in Canada has undergone remarkable growth and development. In a 1982 issue of the *Canadian Historical Review*, Eliane Leslau Silverman commented that women's history in Canada today is a "burgeoning field" from which a "voluminous, rigorous and often lively literature is emerging."[1] But even as she applauded the efforts of Canada's new generation of women's historians, Silverman warned that their work too reflects the limitations of working within a disciplinary tradition — even when it attempts to analyse such new and provoking subjects as the institutions of social change, the processes of change, the material bases of life, or popular beliefs and perceptions. Too often, she says, historians write on subjects merely because they are accessible. Silverman challenges women's historians

> to be more daring than they have been, more prepared to ask new questions, to speculate even from fragmentary data, to be suggestive as well as definitive.[2]

This is essential, she says, if historians are to "retrieve women's lives from the silence."[3]

Like the history of the family or working class history, the history of women is a theme within the field of social history that emerged in Canada beginning in the early 1970s. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this "new" social history is that it brought non-elite populations into the realm of academic enquiry — populations which, for the most part, left no written account of their lives.

It is hardly surprising, then, that historians investigating the lives of women should focus — as Silverman suggested — on topics where at least some documentation exists — limited though it might be. Joan Wallach Scott began her exhaustive survey of British, European and American writings in women's history in *Past and Present*, in November 1983, with a call similar to that of Silverman for rooting out new sources of evidence and new methodologies. She began with a quote from Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf wrote:

> What one wants . . . is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house

> like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. . . .[4]

As a social historian working with artifacts on a daily basis, I would suggest that one of the best under-utilized sources of information concerning the lives of women (as well as other subjects of social history) is to be found in material history evidence. If one wants to know what the houses of Elizabethan women looked like — then what better way to find out than to go out and look at them? If we want to know what it was like to cook for a family in a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century household, or what it was like to do the laundry or the sewing, then why not look at, or better still, pick up and examine the tools, implements, and products which these women used? The same holds true for any other household task, or indeed, for any other activity, inside or outside the home.

Unfortunately, university historians have traditionally ignored material history in favour of documentary research, and even today remain largely unaware of the scholarship being produced in this field. And museum historians, traditionally antiquarians or collectors, often have remained isolated from much of the academic research being done. As prominent United States material culture historian Thomas Schlereth observed to a Canadian museum audience in 1979,

> The formal study of American history over the past two centuries has largely been written without reference to the three-dimensional evidence of the American past, while the preservation, restoration and interpretation of artifacts has also too often proceeded on the basis of outmoded historical theory or inadequate historical research.[5]

Schlereth noted, though, that there were a few signs of greater collaboration developing in some areas between "university" and "museum" historians.[6]

One area where important attempts at such synthesis are underway is in the study of women's history. The increased interest in this subject in recent years and the paucity of extensive written documentation have combined to foster a growing appreciation of the abundance of artifactual data available to scholars, and have inspired exciting material history research on women.

Ruth Schwartz Cowan, an Associate Professor of History at the State University of New York, is considered a leader in this field.

In 1973 she presented her landmark study on the "Industrial Revolution in the Home"[7] to the Society for the History of Technology. Cowan's interest was in the impact of new technology on women's domestic role in the early twentieth century.

Her paper asked questions about the "industrial revolution" in the home similar to those that social historians, like E.P. Thompson, have asked about the implications of industrialisation for workers in the new factories.[8] This latter research showed that, despite the benefits that resulted from industrialisation, workers also suffered the loss of skills and diminishing control over the work process, and had to contend with the rigours of industrial discipline, unsanitary and hazardous working conditions, and meagre wages.

Cowan found that the assumptions made about the liberalising impact of new industrial technology in the home were more difficult to challenge, however, for here the facts were even more difficult to reveal. Pay schedules, time charts, and the evidence of Royal Commissions simply do not exist to help historians to reconstruct the lives of women whose workdays were spent in the home. What impact, for example, did early twentieth-century technological change have in the home upon "Blue Monday," with its arduous tasks of washing and ironing the family's laundry? In order to answer these questions, Cowan utilised not only traditional documentary evidence such as social surveys and government statistics, but also examined household interiors and domestic utensils. She concentrated primarily, though, on a frequently overlooked type of material history evidence — pictorial advertisements in women's magazines. Using this combination of data, she found that

> The electrification and mechanization of the American household in at least four activities — laundering, heating (both for cooking and for human comfort), cleaning, and food preparation and storage, amount to nothing less than a genuine industrial revolution. . . .[9]

In 1917, she found, 24.3 percent of American households had electricity. By 1930, this figure had risen to 84.8 percent. Not only did this mean the disappearance of gas and oil lamps in favour of electrical lighting, but many small electrical appliances, including the electric iron, quickly appeared. "Ironing," wrote Cowan,

> had traditionally been one of the most dreadful household chores, especially on warm days when the kitchen stove had to be kept hot for the better part of the day; irons were heavy and they had to be returned to the stove frequently to be reheated. Electric irons eased

> a good part of this burden. They were relatively inexpensive and very quickly replaced their predecessors; advertisements for electric irons first began to appear in the ladies magazines after World War I, and by the end of the decade the old flatiron had disappeared; by 1929 a survey of a hundred Ford employees revealed that ninety-eight of them had the new electric irons in their homes.[10]

Cowan continued her investigation with an examination of the washing machine, and the impact of the appearance of soap powders on the market in the early 1920s, which potentially eliminated the need to scrape and boil bars of laundry soap. She concluded that, by the end of the 1920s, "Blue Monday" must have been considerably less "blue" for some housewives — but it was probably considerably less "Monday" as well, for with an electric iron, a washing machine, and a hot water heater, there was no need to limit the washing to just one day of the week.

With the new, more convenient household appliances, women were expected to manage all domestic tasks easily, despite the disappearance of domestic servants during these years, and household standards quickly became more exacting. Instead of decreasing the amount of labour that it was necessary for the housewife to expend, the new technology increased it. This increase in women's home labour was intensified further as new ideologies emerged with the rise of consumer advertising aimed at women. Wrote Cowan,

> After the war, housework changed; it was no longer a trial and chore but something quite different — an emotional 'trip'. Laundering was not just laundering, but an expression of love; the housewife who truly loved her family would protect them from the embarrassment of tattletale gray. And so on....[11]

Cowan's work provided much of the inspiration for recent research on women's domestic work in Canada, including that of Barbara Riley, a historian at the National Museum of Civilization in Ottawa.[12] It, too, was informed by traditional archival research, but Riley's study placed a greater emphasis than Cowan's did on artifactual data. By examining artifacts and interviewing their owners about the ways in which they were used, Riley was able to discover important new information about the transition from the use of the flatiron to the electric iron and, consequently, about women's lives in the 1920s. It was a transition, she learned, that was not as linear a process as Cowan's work suggested.

Despite the fact that electric irons replaced flatirons in popular advertising by the end of the 1920s, and although they may have appeared in most people's homes by that time, the art of ironing

had not, in fact, been completely revolutionised. Flatirons, Riley's interviewees informed her, were used alongside the new electric irons — and were considered to be more convenient. Not only were they easier to heat (on the kitchen's already hot coal stove), but, to the experienced housewife, their performance was more reliable than that of the first electric irons, which had no temperature controls or indicators. And, if one is convinced that, if nothing else, the first electric irons had their lighter weight to commend them, an examination of at least some early models, such as the one seen here, quickly refutes that idea. It weighs 17 pounds. Two hundred and twenty-watt Taylor irons such as this

220-Watt Taylor Iron, c. 1920. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

one, collected in Kleefeld, Manitoba in 1967, are said to have been common in the early twentieth century and were later used as tile removers. An examination of the intermediary or alternative technology — the kerosene burning iron — quickly reveals that it too was inconvenient and required considerable skill to operate, as well as being messy.

Kerosene Iron, c. 1920s. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

Artifactual evidence, then, properly interpreted, can provide an important alternative perspective on the past and sometimes can provide information that is otherwise not available. Consider also, for example, the wealth of information that a common nineteenth- or early twentieth-century object like a quilt can offer us about women's lives. The artistic skill of the maker, her frugal habits in collecting bits and pieces of cloth, her manual dexterity and patience in their assembly, her social life as represented by the quilting bee, and her need for warmth, comfort, and perhaps some special symbolism in the pattern she created, all are reflected in such an artifact. Society's patriarchal values also are reflected in the shunting off of this, and other similar women's skills, into the lesser category of "craft" as opposed to "art."

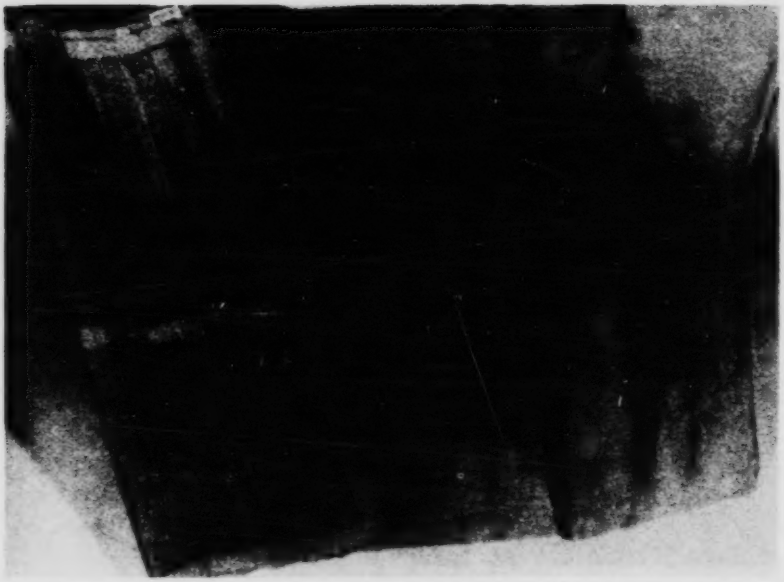
Or, what of the insights that material history evidence might offer on a virtually undocumented, but central issue in women's lives like the history of reproduction and contraception? Artifacts like contraceptive gel — which contained lactic and boric acid — or "Menopax" tablets for "the relief of vasomotor and nervous symptoms of the menopause," or "Wycones Vaginal Suppositories" which combined the functions of "sedative, deodorant, and astringent" offer some insights. One of the most interesting objects in

Contraceptives, c. 1930s. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

this genre I have seen is the birthing mat. Made from layers of newspaper and covered with white absorbent cloth, this artifact conjures up a vivid image of what childbirth must have been like in an isolated pioneer home.

Clearly, great potential exists in such objects as these for the research, analysis and interpretation of women's history. If, thus far, this evidence has failed to make its way into the historical profession's written accounts of women's lives, what have museums done with it? Not surprisingly, just as university historians traditionally focussed on the "great men" of the past, and on the political and economic issues that surrounded them, history museums too tended to focus upon society's elite. Very little information was presented in museum exhibits that dealt with the lives of ordinary working people, or of women of any class.

Historian Michael Wallace discussed this problem in a 1981 issue of *Radical History Review*, in which he examined a variety of American museums built since the mid-nineteenth century.[13] Usually founded by old patrician families, industrial magnates, and powerful financiers, these institutions, Wallace argued, reflected the world view of the elite which sponsored them. He



Birthing Mat, c. 1930s. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

looked, for example, at John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s Colonial Williamsburg, where life in eighteenth-century Virginia was depicted without even a mention of the working women and men who made up 90 percent of the colony's population. Black slaves, who made up most of this population, were given no place at all in this museum. This failure to portray accurately the historical context of the period depicted was evident even in the museums that featured the experiences of domestics, craftsworkers and farming families, because they left out all those who comprised the upper stratum of society. In doing so, Wallace concluded, they eliminated any possible references to the social, political and economic realities experienced by the women and men depicted in these museums.

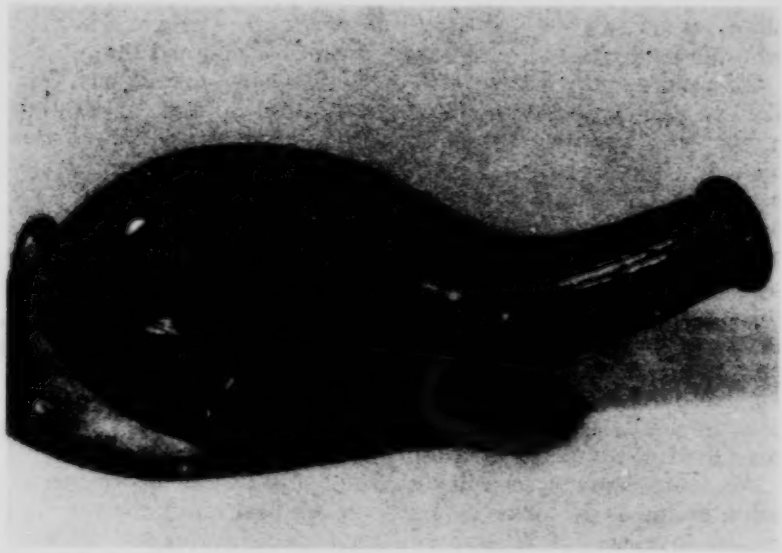
Canada, too, has its share of museums that contain impressive collections but which do little to interpret the historical period from which their treasures sprang. These include not only institutions that date back to the years of antiquarianism, but also more recent efforts, like the newly opened George R. Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art in Toronto. Housed in a modern "art gallery-like" setting, this museum boasts a beautiful and extremely valuable

collection of porcelain and pottery. The pieces are displayed as objects of art, however, with few references to the men and women who made, decorated, purchased, owned, or cleaned them.

On a more optimistic note though, the years since World War II have seen an unprecedented growth and interest in popular history museums across North America. Here, in re-created pioneer villages, restored houses, reconstructed forts and other museums, Canadians can learn about some aspects of their own history. In part, no doubt, because of the ready availability of appropriate artifacts, but also, perhaps, because of the relatively large numbers of women working in these museums, the intricacies of female tasks of bygone years receive high priority in these museums. Butter making; soap and candle making; baking bread or cooking on a wood stove, using cast iron pots and kettles; quilting bees; and many other such scenes of typical pioneer life are demonstrated in dioramas, or acted out by costumed interpreters at these sites.

When we begin to look beyond the domestic role of women in colonial and early rural life, however, we find that far less information is presented. What, for example, do museums tell us about the history of reproduction and contraception? As we have seen, the artifacts exist to allow us to explore this theme. The Museum of the History of Medicine, in Toronto, has perhaps made the best start in Canada at documenting this history, but freely admits there is a long way to go. Numerous delightful porcelain figures depicting the once common female occupation of wet-nursing are featured at this museum, along with dozens and dozens of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century baby rattles and pap bottles. These fascinating artifacts are filled with information about women's lives, child-raising practices, infant mortality, and societal customs and attitudes, and question after question springs to mind as one views them. Who were these wet nurses, so romantically portrayed in porcelain? Did they come from a particular class? Did they serve a particular class? How many were there? For how many years did — or could — a woman perform this function? How many infants, and of what ages, did she care for? How was she viewed by the women and men of her time? Certainly, whoever made the figurines saw her as the ideal of womanhood. What became of her?

And what of the pap bottles? Similar in shape and design to the early twentieth-century baby bottle, but open, bowl-like at the



Baby Bottle, c. 1920s. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

top, these vessels were used to literally force-feed infants incredible volumes of a thin gruel mixture. Their usage is thought to be responsible, to a considerable extent, for the high infant mortality rates of their era. Yet the finely crafted and ornate character of these bottles loudly proclaims their owners' pride and pleasure in their newborn. Unfortunately, these and other questions are not explored. As currently organised, these objects remain little more than a collection of curios that reflect the particular interests of the children's doctor who originally assembled them.

A lack of research, analysis and interpretation is not the only problem from which museum collections can suffer. They may have a variety of deficiencies, beginning with overrepresentation in some areas, and underrepresentation or nonrepresentation in others. This can happen, as with the Museum of Medicine, because a valuable but select private collection comes into the museum's care. It also commonly happens because most publicly owned museums have limited funding, and rely upon public donations to fill their storage spaces. What ends up in a museum's collection, therefore, is often a reflection of what the public *thinks* should be there and *which* members of society consider their property important enough to be deposited in a museum. Wedding dresses,

Storage room, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, showing collection of evening gloves. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

christening gowns, fine silk stockings, and elbow-length kid gloves have to be turned away, while aprons, house dresses or underwear remain a novelty.

Not only must today's museum historians cope with the collections assembled by their predecessors — who may have had very different interests or a different ideological outlook than themselves — they also often face a lack of complete — or any — documentation. This is no doubt related to the traditional separation between the "historical profession" and historians working in museums and at historic sites. Until recently, artifacts in museums were commonly seen as the "relics" of great men, or as antiquities or curios — not as pieces of historical evidence to be analysed and interpreted. As Barbara Riley put it:

> Artifacts were regarded pretty much as an end in themselves — you collected them, you identified them, and you put them in an exhibition — and that was the end of it. (They) had served (their) purpose.[14]

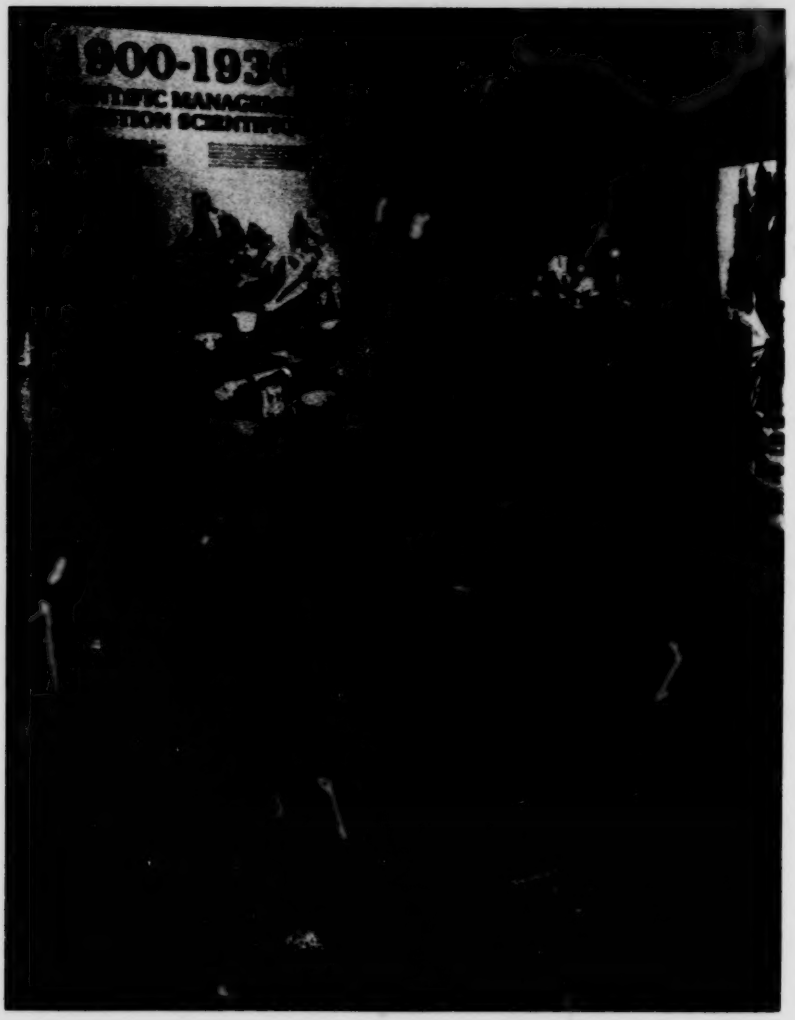
Important historical data and, therefore, the cultural significance of an object were easily lost.

In museums and at historic sites across Canada today, however, various projects are underway that combine academic and material history research. The work being done by Barbara Riley on domestic work, food production, and household technology is one example. Other projects have investigated the social history of quilt making, and the furbishment and organisation of kitchens. Recent exhibits have looked at the effect of the typewriter and dictating, calculating and duplicating machines on the evolution of office work; and on the participation of women in the pre-industrial, outport cod fishery of Newfoundland.[15] An exhibit currently being developed in Ottawa will examine the history of maternity, birth and childhood. The 'Concerning Work' Exhibit produced at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature in 1983 placed considerable emphasis on the changing role of women's work both in the home and in the workplace as it explored the impact of technological change from 1850 through to the year 2000.

In my own current research on fraternal orders, benevolent societies and early trade unions in Manitoba, I am discovering not only a vast array of fascinating artifacts but also important information about attitudes toward women and the participation of women in these organisations. For example, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, a fraternal secret society transplanted to Canada from the United States in 1912, excluded female members from its ranks. During his initiation, however,

"Concerning Work" exhibit, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Doug Smaill.

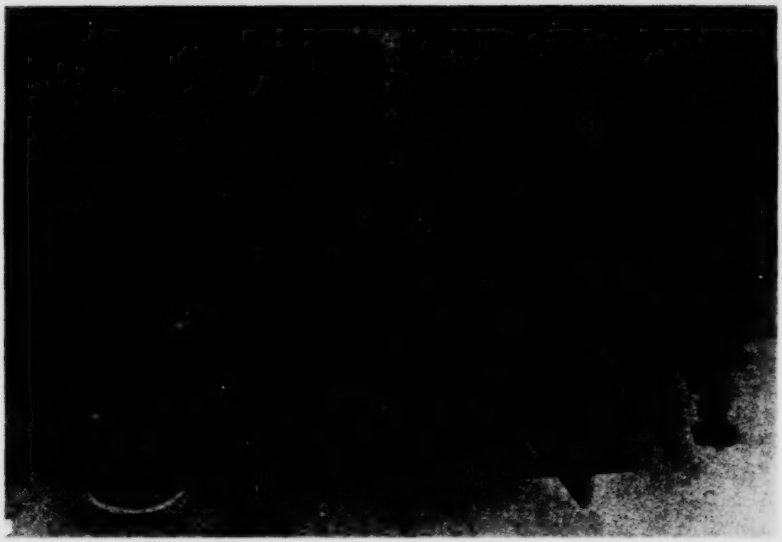
each candidate pledged never to "violate the chastity of the mother, sister, wife or daughter of a Brother Elk. This vow," he pledged, "shall keep them as sacred to me as my own mother." Virtually nothing is known about the significance and role of such organisations in men's lives — much less in women's. Yet women



"Concerning Work" exhibit, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Doug Smaill.

actively participated in groups like the Order of the Eastern Star, the Eagles, the Orange Order and the Oddfellows, and of course the Daughters of the Empire, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and many early trade organisations.

Daughters and Maids of England Benevolent Society Ribbon, c. 1900. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.



Order of the Eastern Star Regalia, twentieth century. Collection of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo: Gerry Berkowski.

In order for museums to accomplish successfully their mandate regarding the documentation and interpretation of women's history, and, I think, in order for university historians to succeed in meeting the challenge of writing a more complete and sensitive chronicle of women's lives, it will be necessary for more projects of this kind to be undertaken. The traditional separation between material history research and academic research must be overcome and in its place must come a sharing, not only of kinds of historical evidence and methodologies, but also of historical theories and conjectures.

Notes

1 Eliane Leslau Silverman, "Writing Canadian Women's History, 1970-82: an Historiographical Analysis," *Canadian Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (December 1982): 513.
2 Ibid., 531.
3 Ibid.
4 Joan Wallach Scott, "Women in History: Survey Articles — The Modern Period," *Past and Present* 101 (November 1983): 141.
5 Thomas J. Schlereth, "Material Culture Studies in America: Notes Toward a Historical Perspective," *Material History Bulletin* 8, papers from Canada's Material History: A Forum, 1-3 March 1979 (Ottawa, 1979): 95.

6 Ibid. See also Charles T. Lyles, "The Historian's Attitude Toward the Artifact" (M.A. thesis, Winterthur University of Delaware, 1972); and E. McClung Fleming, "The University and the Museum: Needs and Opportunities for Cooperation," *Museologist* 3 (June 1969): 10-18.

7 Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century," in Thomas J. Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville, Tennessee: The American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 222-36. Reprinted from *Technology and Culture* 17 (January 1976): 1-23.

8 Edward P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967): 56-97.

9 Thomas J. Schlereth, in his introduction to Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home," 223.

10 Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home," 226-27.

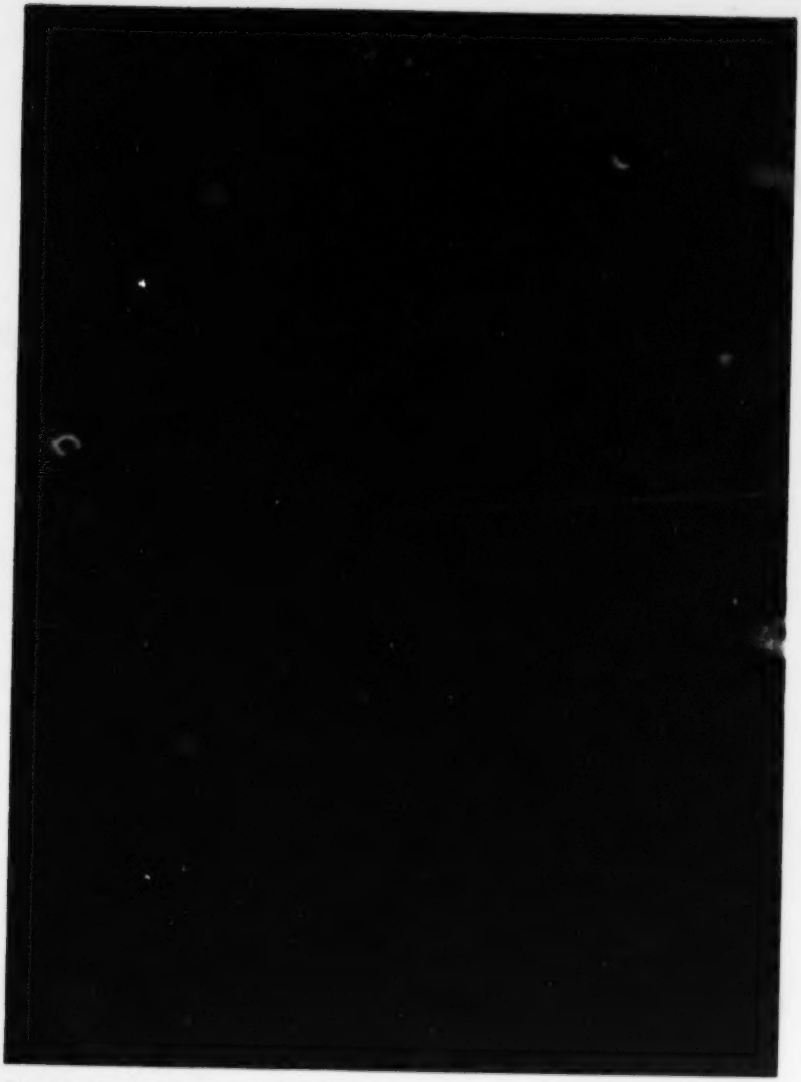
11 Ibid., 232.

12 Barbara Riley, "Technology in the Home: Domestic Food Production in British Columbia, 1900-1930," an unpublished presentation given at the Women and Technology session of the Canadian History of Science and Technology Association Conference, Kingston, Ontario (October 1983).

13 Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States," *Radical History Review* 25 (1981): 63-96.

14 Barbara Riley, "Domestic Work: Oral History and Material Culture," a presentation to the Canadian Oral History Association Annual Conference, Winnipeg (11 October 1984).

15 For further information on these exhibits and research projects, contact the Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton (Alberta Quilts and Domestic Kitchens); the Glenbow Museum, Calgary (Office Technology); and the Newfoundland Museum, St. John's (The Outport Cod Fishery).



The Reverend Mr. Egerton Ryerson Young and his wife, Elizabeth Bingham Young, on their departure from Ontario for mission work in the Northwest in 1868. Collection: Jennifer Brown.

A Cree Nurse in a Cradle of Methodism: Little Mary and the Egerton R. Young Family at Norway House and Berens River

Jennifer S.H. Brown

In the last decade of his life, the Reverend E. Ryerson Young, a retired United Church minister in Toronto, Ontario, put on record two reminiscences that recounted his early experiences as the son of a Methodist missionary to the Indians in northern Manitoba. These documents reveal the domestic life and circumstances of a northern mission family in unusually rich and personal detail. More particularly, they highlight the central and formative role that Little Mary, a Cree woman who served the Youngs as their children's nurse from 1869 to 1876, played in E. Ryerson Young's upbringing during his first seven years of life.

It is a commonplace that older people remember their childhood most vividly, and Young was evidently no exception. The earlier of his reminiscences, "A Missionary and his Son," which he probably composed when in his eighties, deals entirely with his first seven years of life at the Cree and Northern Ojibwa (Saulteaux) missions conducted by his father, the Reverend Egerton R. Young. The second, dated 1962, attempts a full autobiography, but fifty-one pages (over two-thirds of the text) are in fact devoted to the author's first decade of life — his years in the Canadian northwest and the major adjustments he went through thereafter, on becoming a schoolboy in rural Ontario in the late 1870s.[1]

There is no question that the content and details of these early experiences stood out strongly in Young's mind. One may question, however, the accuracy and selectivity of such recollections, recorded so many decades after the events. One control is to compare other available records to Young's to assess his historical accuracy and consistency with other portraits of Northern Algonquian Indian and mission life in the region; this has been done as far as possible, with results that seem to confirm the validity of his accounts. Another response is to note what one might describe as the psychic validity of these texts. Setting his memories down at the end of a long life, without any traceable ulterior or publicist motive, Young centred on those events and persons having the greatest hold on him. The structure and emphases of his

autobiography have their own authenticity as a personal statement of what he finally selected as the most meaningful and significant influences in his early development.

E. Ryerson Young (Eddie) and his sister Lilian, both born at Norway House (Rossville Mission). Young's reminiscences describe his parents' efforts to provide the children with proper dress clothing when the family returned to Ontario on furlough, 1873-74. The elder Young, who published this picture in his *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Campfires* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1893), there noted, "The Indian women, who loved to dress them up in the beautiful bead silk worked leather costume of their country, would hardly recognise them as they here appear in their first suits of civilised apparel." Collection: Jennifer Brown.

Egerton Ryerson Young II, known to his parents as Eddie or Ed, was the first white child born at the Methodist mission of Rossville near the Hudson's Bay Company post of Norway House beyond the north end of Lake Winnipeg. He was the eldest child of Egerton R. and Elizabeth Bingham Young, who had travelled from Ontario in the summer of 1868 to begin their first experience in charge of an Indian mission. His birth was to lead the Young family into a close association with "Indian Mary," or "Little Mary," as she was more often called, who became Eddie's "nurse" or nanny when he was a few months old, and remained with the Youngs throughout their mission years at Rossville (1868-73) and Berens River on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg (1874-76).[2]

Of the several Cree and Saulteaux women mentioned in the Young family's writings about their mission days, Little Mary emerges as the strongest and most vivid personality, the Indian whom they all knew best. Other Indian women appear briefly in the books that Egerton R. Young Senior later wrote about the Cree and Saulteaux and Methodist missions, and in a two-part article, "The Transformed Indian Woman," which Mrs. Young published in 1898.[3] But most of these women were merely included to help make larger points about the progress and benefits of Christian missions. They included, for example, Ookemasis, the "Saulteaux Chieftainess; or a Searcher after the Truth," who on her own initiative visited the Youngs at Berens River to learn about the book of the Great Spirit and persuaded the missionary to visit her people and preach.[4] Then there was Astumastao, a little orphan girl who learned Christianity when James Evans was establishing Methodism at Norway House in the early 1840s, and who, when readopted by pagan relatives, carried the new religion in her heart until her uncle, on his deathbed, asked her to tell him about Jesus.[5]

More frequent than the chieftainess or secret convert was the archetype of what we would now call the "battered wife" saved by Christianity, or more precisely, by the conversion or removal of her pagan husband. Thus went the story, for example, of "Betsy the Indian wife" who conveyed her distress at her hard lot to the Youngs at Norway House, and whose husband was thereupon firmly and effectively instructed by Mr. Young and some of his male converts in the duties and respect that Christians owed to their wives.[6] Such too was the theme of the story of Susewist, wife of the Plains Cree chief Maskepetoon. "A man of ungovernable temper in his wild pagan days," he scalped his wife in a rage. She survived, however, as a living reproach to her husband after he converted to Methodism; "the memory of this and other terrible

crimes . . . was a great sorrow to him."[7]

These accounts of abused women and of missionary seriousness in remedying such situations point to a factual reality that has its own importance; there are no strong grounds for idealising Northern Algonquian societies as egalitarian in gender relations or as especially free from domestic abuse and strife.[8] At the same time, however, such brief vignettes of females do not provide great insight into the complexities of Northern Algonquian women's values, their individuality and self-expression, their methods of socialising and enculturating children (both male and female), and their ways of handling conflict and stress. The woman cast as exploited victim is also, in a sense, sometimes exploited by persons who write about her in that vein, to promote with vigour their own religious and social remedies. She may be simplified and stereotyped for the purposes of a morality play that is, in its content, aims and audience, far removed from her own situation.

Little Mary, in contrast, thanks to her years of association with the Youngs, emerges as far more substantial than the shadowy, two-dimensional women who populate most mission literature or, for that matter, most of the historical record pertaining to native women. The starting point of her story parallels those just mentioned; she came to the Youngs as a battered wife. Her husband, an Indian named Robinson, got drunk while trading with some free traders in the Norway House area sometime in 1868-69. Details vary in the versions written by the senior and junior Youngs; but father and son agree that Robinson in a rage attacked his wife with an axe which lodged in her back, and then fled the scene and disappeared.[9]

The injured woman was brought to an Indian house at Rossville the next spring and was slowly nursed back to relative health with Mrs. Young's help, although her back remained deformed like a hunchback's. Meanwhile, on 11 June 1869, E. Ryerson Young was born. "Little Eddie's" arrival stirred much interest among the local Cree, and the chief of the Rossville Indians conferred on him the name Sagastaookemou, "little gentleman from the sunrise land" or "sunrise gentleman," as the Youngs translated it, which the Indians shortened to Sagastao.[10]

A few months later, when the invalid Indian woman regained the ability to walk, she came to the Rossville mission home to express gratitude for the Youngs' assistance and "installed herself as [Eddie's] nurse."[11] E. Ryerson Young in both his reminiscences recorded his parents' memory of the event:

> When in the mission house she looked around to see if there was

> anything she could do to express her thanks. She saw a little black-haired boy in his cradle and she exclaimed, 'Oh, I'll take care of him', and she constituted herself as my nurse.[12]

Little Mary, as she became known to the Youngs, showed initiative and strength of personality in many ways as the family got to know her better. She would never speak English (although she learned to read Cree syllabics), and it was mainly to her that Eddie and his younger sister Lilian or "Minnehaha" ("laughing waters"), born on 10 March 1871, owed their childhood fluency in Cree. She became the children's staunch protector and advocate. Her particular attachment to Eddie was clear, however, and probably reflected a Cree preference for male children. Her reaction when Lilian was born demonstrated her bias and required Mr. Young to clarify the range of her future responsibilities:

> Little Mary felt her [Lilian] carefully all over then she laid her back in mother's arms saying, 'girl very nice but I like boy better'. She wished to take all the care of the little boy and some one else could look after the little sister. Father had some difficulty in making her understand that he could not support a nurse for each child, and if she would take care of the boy she must take care of the little girl too.[13]

Mary's strong opinions emerged most strikingly, however, in the domain of discipline and punishment. Among the Youngs' later memories of her, Mary's Cree abhorrence for Euro-Canadians' corporal punishment or confinement of naughty children stood out most vividly. Two themes of intercultural conflict were clearly blended here. Mary the Cree brought to her new position no concept of arbitrary authority. Cree cultural values did not confer coercive powers on parents and certainly provided no equivalent to the Euro-Canadian master-servant relationship.[14] Mary, then, was dismayed to see her charges punished or confined, and doubly offended (and, no doubt, puzzled) at being expected to comply with or abet such punishment as a dutiful servant of the parents. As her master, Egerton Young, recalled in 1903:

> At times, especially in the matter of parental discipline, there would be collisions between Mary and the mother of the children; for the nurse, with her Indian ideas, could not accept of the position of a disciplined servant, nor could she quietly witness the punishment of children whom she thought absolutely perfect.[15]

Eddie Ryerson had vivid childhood memories of how these fundamental conflicts were acted out in the household, and of how

Mary used the occasions to teach him her own basic lessons about how a Cree male should behave, assert himself, and endure pain and punishment:

> I was soon made to understand that there were different ways to raise children, the Indian and the English, which said 'little children should be seen and not heard' and 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. Little Mary was always ready to serve me as quickly as possible but I would protest often very loudly if I were not quickly served. On such occasions father or mother would try to make me more reasonable and if I did not cease my shouting and demonstrations they would whip me. Little Mary on her part thought I was perfectly justified in raising a clamor; 'you want him to be a leader then he must learn to insist on having his way'. Father and mother didn't see it that way, so, to please Mary they tried every way to soften their punishment. But I was not easily conquered and so when Mary saw she could do nothing to soften their punishment she would say to me, 'don't let them know they hurt you when they beat you, then they will quit beating you'. In this way she tried to make a spartan out of me and on their part my parents learned that whipping did little to improve my conduct and they were always on the hunt for other methods to chastise me.[16]

Eddie learned Mary's lesson well and, as we shall see, carried it over with effect into his later Ontario school experiences.

E. Ryerson Young also recorded two specific occasions when Little Mary actually intervened to forestall his physical punishment. At Berens River, when Eddie was about five, he was "a little too demonstrative in church" one Sunday. Afterwards, his father approached him with a birch switch. Mary pressed herself between father and son. When Mr. Young asked her to stand back, she quickly asked him, "Missionary, haven't you said to us Indians you should not do unnecessary work on Sunday or any work you could do just as well some other day?"

"What's that got to do with us today?" asked Mr. Young in return.

"Why," said Mary, "you could whip this boy some other day and so it is unnecessary work for you to do today."

Mr. Young relented, but told Mary to bring Eddie to him on Monday morning. She of course did not. When Mr. Young asked for him, Mary inquired if he still planned to whip the boy. When he answered yes, she replied, "Does it do any good, Missionary, to whip a child when it does not know for what it is being whipped?"

"Why, no," Mr. Young responded.

"Well," Mary said, "little boys have short memories and if you whip this little boy now he won't know for what he's being whipped and it won't do any good."

"Well, take him away," replied Mr. Young, "and tell him if he misbehaves again I will thrash him on the spot."[17]

Another incident illustrated the rubs that could develop between Mrs. Young and Mary over the issue of punishment. When Eddie, one time, slapped his little sister, Mrs. Young quickly reached for a clothes brush to strike him. Mary as quickly intervened, and caught the blow herself. As Eddie recalled,

> Mother was very angry and said, 'Stand back. I'll not let any one come between me and my child', and struck me again with the brush. Little Mary left the room as much annoyed as mother was. She went to a peg in the kitchen, took down her shawl, and left the house.

Mary did not return for the rest of the day. Early the next morning, Eddie went hunting for her and found her in the bush behind the mission. Rushing to her, "he put his arms around her neck and dragged her into the house." Mary showed a stoical Cree response; putting her shawl back on its peg, she began her cooking and other work as if nothing had happened. Eddie later sensed that the occurrence, though never discussed, was instructive to both Mary and his mother. "Neither woman so far as I know," he wrote, "ever referred to the incident again. Each learned something of the character of the other."[18]

When the senior Youngs chose confinement over whipping as a means of punishing their children, Little Mary had her own remedy for that as well. The Rossville mission house had a dark closet under the stairs, and on one occasion Mr. Young shut his little boy into it saying, "you can stay there until you promise to behave yourself." After some time, he opened the door and asked, "are you ready to behave yourself and come out?"[19]

"Oh no," was the son's recollection of his reply to his father. "Not as long as Little Mary would stay here and tell me Indian stories." Mary had crept into the closet and was sitting on the floor consoling and cheering her devoted protégé.[20]

Egerton R. Young Senior recorded a similar incident at Berens River sometime between 1873 and 1875. Eddie and his younger sister sneaked out of bed early one morning to visit an old Saulteaux named Souwanas, of whose Nanahboozhoo stories they were very fond. They were found on the trail being threatened by Indian dogs. As punishment for running away, their distraught parents confined them to their room for the next night and day on a diet of bread and water. Mary took her bedding into their room that night and slept on the floor between their beds. When the children were released at six the next evening, their father greeted them with a rather formal statement of regret at their punishment and yet of the need for it. Reportedly, the brother

and sister quickly answered that their father need not feel badly; Mary had been with them all day telling stories, and had brought them "taffy candy . . . and some currant cakes and other nice things, so we got along very well after all." The parents began to wonder if the punishment had any effect, but the children later told them they had talked the whole affair over with Mary and she had "shown us that it was naughty on our parts to run away as we did" and to cause such anxiety.[21]

The storytelling theme in these two incidents draws attention to a domain in which Mary's role was active and positive rather than simply reactive and defensive. When Mary told the children stories (which she evidently did all the time, not just when they were confined), she was not only teaching them Cree and amusing them; she was, in a sense, bringing them up as Cree, introducing them at an impressionable age to her people's world view, culture, and prime mode of instruction.

During the Norway House years, Eddie and his infant sister Lilian were too young to absorb the full richness of Northern Algonquian culture that Mary could teach them. At Berens River, however, they became old enough both to undergo some instruction from their parents and to assimilate Indian ways of thought and behaviour. Several circumstances worked together to heighten Indian influences upon them (and particularly on Eddie as he approached his seventh year) and to channel those influences through the storytelling medium in this new setting.

Berens River was a new mission, among a Saulteaux (Northern Ojibwa) rather than a Cree population. Egerton R. Young saw agricultural possibilities in the land at the mouth of the river, and his superiors hoped that he would there be able to minister both to the local Saulteaux and to Cree who would follow him from the Rossville mission at Norway House, thus relieving the pressures on Rossville subsistence resources which had suffered as that community grew. At Berens River, the Youngs found themselves among a mainly non-Christian population interested in what the mission had to offer but strong in its own ways and traditions. The Hudson's Bay Company presence was also weaker here; Berens River was a small outpost, not a major depot like Norway House.[22]

Some Norway House Cree Methodists indeed soon joined the Youngs at Berens River, and among the first to arrive was Little Mary.[23] While resuming her familiar household position, however, she faced fresh challenges to her special relationship with the Youngs' children.

Like the Rossville Cree, the Saulteaux took a great interest in

the children. When on 9 May 1875 a daughter, Florence, was born to the Youngs, the first white child born at Berens River, the Saulteaux held a naming ceremony for her (minus "pagan" elements), and adopted her into the tribe with the name Souwanaquenapete, "voice of the south wind birds." Deliberately incorporated in the name itself was that of Souwanas (South Wind), the Berens River elder who became, through his storytelling powers and his interest in drawing the children into Saulteaux life, a rival figure to Mary the Cree.[24] Souwanas actively engaged the attentions of Egerton Young himself in the mission context; Young featured him in both his book *Algonquin Indian Tales* and his personal records of Berens River and sought to convert him, apparently without success. Under the date of 26 February 1875, for example, Young wrote a description of a conversation with Souwanas on religion, with a vivid postscript on the man and his character:

> Souwanas is a noble old Saulteaux Indian. He is an *honest trusty truthful pagan* Indian. I have long coveted him for the Lord. He is a noted old conjurer, and by his incessant attention to his pagan religious rites often shames us for the briefness of the time we spend in sweet communion with our God.[25]

It was with Souwanas and his fellow pagan Saulteaux, Jakoos, that Egerton Young opened the narrative in *Algonquin Indian Tales*. As Young put it, the Indians had decided among themselves to test the missionary's purported trust and love towards them; "If the white father and mother love us as they say they do we will test them by taking away their children without asking permission." And so, one day, much to the concern of Little Mary, Souwanas and Jakoos carried Eddie and Lilian off to their camp to initiate them to stories about Nanahboozhoo, the major Northern Ojibwa mythological personage, distinct from his Cree analogue, Wisahkecahk. When the children returned, the senior Youngs welcomed them quietly, not wishing "to lessen their influence by finding fault with them [Souwanas and Jakoos] for carrying off the children."[26] Eddie himself retained fond memories of other fishing and storytelling excursions with Jakoos.

Little Mary, however, was impelled to strengthen her own hold on Eddie and Lilian whom she had been rearing, in a sense, as Cree, and disparaged the Saulteaux stories and story hero.[27] Much of the elder Young's book of tales turns on the rivalry between Mary and Souwanas as they engaged in a kind of Cree/Saulteaux story duel. There evidently was mutual respect in the relationship; the Berens River Indians knew of Mary's history and her

survival after her terrible injury, and they attributed special powers to her. As Young expressed it, "she was considered to be under the special care of the Good Spirit, so that even the most influential chiefs or hunters had a superstitious fear of showing any temper, or any bitter retort, no matter what she might say."[28] But this did not keep Souwanas from reminding Eddie and Lilian (and Mary) that they were, after all, "only Crees" whereas Florence, the youngest sister, was "pure Saulteaux."[29] Egerton Young, who himself became known as an effective storyteller, may have played up this Cree/Saulteaux rivalry to heighten the interest of his book of Algonquian stories. But it is a rivalry well documented in other Manitoba historical sources,[30] and Mary's discomfiture among the Saulteaux is convincingly reported.

Exposure to two Northern Algonquian storytelling traditions strengthened Eddie's involvement in Indian life and culture more than his parents probably realized at the time. He not only learned the subject matter and form of the stories; he acquired an informal understanding about the value of storytelling as a means of instruction and education, and showed a budding skill in that direction. One Christmas at Berens River, Eddie received a child's Bible with full-page pictures which fascinated and puzzled him. He absorbed his father's explanations of them with enthusiasm. One spring Sunday morning, he was sitting on a rock near the church steps with his book when the Indians began to arrive for the service. They stopped to look at its pictures, and soon Eddie was telling the story of Isaiah to an assemblage of forty or more. Mr. Young came along and entered the church, which was the usual signal for the Indians to enter as well. When none followed him in, the missionary was obliged to tell his son to "quit talking," and Little Mary was called "to take the boy and his book into the mission house and let the Indians come into the church." The Indians entered, but as Eddie recalled, they "said they would rather hear me talking in straight ahead Cree than to hear him [Mr. Young] stumbling over interpreters."[31]

Even if Eddie was learning his Bible, his Indianisation was proceeding apace on other fronts. During one winter (probably 1875-76), he set out more than fifty rabbit snares which he checked every other day, using skills that he had begun to learn at Norway House under the tutelage of Sandy Harte, a Cree boy from Nelson House who lived for some time with the Youngs. Once in a while he caught an ermine and Little Mary showed him how she would stretch the skin and rub it until it was clean and as soft as silk. When the local Hudson's Bay Company trader heard that the Youngs had some ermine skins he accused them of trading

privately with the Indians and had to be convinced that the furs were taken by their own son.[32] Eddie and Lilian were of course at ease with canoes and dog sleds, and Little Mary kept them dressed in skilfully made "deerskin" clothing. As infants, they had been carried in moss bags; and as they grew the Indians made them gifts of their own handiwork. Souwanas, for example, made Eddie a bow and quiver full of arrows, while his wife made for Lilian "an elaborate baby cradle, of the Indian pattern" so that she could carry her doll in Indian style.[33]

Eddie also increasingly sought out Indian company on his own. He enjoyed spending time at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Berens River, where he met visiting Indians and was sometimes called upon as a "serviceable go-between" because of his skill in their language. Without his parents' knowledge, as he recalled, some of these visitors "thought it sport to paint my face, stick feathers in my hair and teach me their dances."[34] These experiences paved the way for an event which was momentous and rather traumatic for both father and son.

One time, Mrs. Young complained that in nearly eight years of life in the north, she had not seen an Indian dance performance. Mr. Young sent a dance request with some tobacco to a chief who had just come down the river with his followers, and that afternoon the Youngs were invited to a Bear Dance. As they approached the chief's tent, which was open at the bottom, Mrs. Young saw, among the legs of the other dancers, "a pair of little legs that were familiar to her." Although anxious, she held her peace as the chief seated his guests with great courtesy. The sequel is best told in the words of E. Ryerson Young himself:

> When the youngsters came in with their hops, steps and jumps, the Missionary remarked to his wife that he did not know that such little boys were called upon to perform. This remark made my mother tremble.
>
> My disguise was fairly complete, but in the gyrations of the dance there was a good deal of stamping. The stockings I had on were dark brown and not unlike the colour of an Indian's legs. Fate, however, was against me, for in doing the extra stamping before the 'honoured guests' a garter gave out and a brown stocking fell down, exposing a white leg! I caught sight of my mother's face and it was so full of dismay that I seemed to realize instantly that I was in the wrong place and immediately sought refuge at her feet. My father's face appeared to turn all colours, my mother said; but whatever he felt, he knew that he was the guest of an Indian Chief and there was a decorum that must be observed. But, as soon as he could, he thanked the Chief for his entertainment, and, taking his wife by one hand, he seized his boy with the other and marched them as

quickly as he could to the Mission House.

After securing a long birch rod he took me into the dining-room the largest room in the house. Mother and Little Mary were asked to leave the room. He shoved the table against the wall and sat down in a rocking-chair, shook the gad at me and said:

'Dance'!

I was somewhat relieved at the command, for I thought then that he only wanted to see the manner of the dance. So for him I went through the whole performance, and then said:

'That's the way of it'.

But he did not seem to appreciate my performance, and, shaking the rod ominously near my legs, he repeated the command 'Dance'!

Fear crept into my heart and I began to wonder what he wanted, but I went through the dance again. Still he said 'Dance'! and that gad played near my legs, both of which were now bare.

Whenever I showed any sign of stopping he shook the rod and ordered sternly 'Dance'!

At last, tired out, I crumpled to the floor.

He then dropped the rod, sprang to his feet, and, taking me into his arms, sank back into the chair. He held me passionately to his breast and I felt the beating of his heart. He just sat and rocked and held me as tightly as he could. I even forgot my own fears as I felt the beating of his heart and wondered at his silence.

'My boy, my precious boy'! he said, or rather murmured, at last.

Then his words came like a flood. He told me all about his early home, his conversion and success in his early ministry, how he and mother had left home, city church and loving friends to come out to preach the Gospel to the Indians, that they might be lifted from heathenish practices and degradation. Mother and he had endured all manner of hardships — cold, hunger and loneliness — all to do Christ's work. Had all those prayers, sacrifices and sufferings been in vain? God had given them a little boy, who was more precious to them than their own lives, and, instead of their lifting up the Indians, the Indians were dragging down their precious boy to their heathenish ways.[35]

Interestingly, Eddie's following comments on this event indicate that the main message he retained from it was of his father's overpowering love and concern for him ("I could never free myself from the impression made upon me by that beating heart"), rather than of a proscription against all things Indian. From his father's view-

point, however, the accumulating influences of Eddie's Indian environment were becoming too deep and powerful. Mr. Young decided that the family should return to Ontario in mid-1876. The official reason for cutting short his five-year term of engagement at Berens River was the deterioration in Mrs. Young's health — and indeed her condition alone was evidently reason enough to leave the mission field. But his son, in later life, was fairly certain that "after what he [Mr. Young] had seen in that pagan Chief's tent he was almost as deeply concerned about me" as about his wife.[36]

Eddie had poignant memories of leaving his mission home. In particular, "It was very difficult for me to say Good By to Little Mary. Mother would like to have taken her home to Ontario but father said, 'we cannot think of it; if anything happened to Mary, the Indians would not believe anything else but that we had mistreated her'." Mr. Young was promised by his native helper at Berens River, Timothy Bear, that "he would do his best to see that Little Mary was well cared for." Understandably, though, "the last parting of Mary and her beloved protégé was almost tragic."[37]

The arrival in Ontario was equally trying, in Eddie's memory. He had been in Ontario once before, during the family's furlough in 1873, and had learned in a couple of incidents that childhood and family life in Ontario were very different from his own. But the reality of those contrasts struck him indelibly in June of 1876 when his mother's relatives in Bradford, north of Toronto, gave a birthday party for his seventh birthday, at which he found his "Indian-ness" (as on other occasions in Ontario) had become a weapon to be used against him. His description in "A Missionary and his Son" aptly conveys how the encounter between his young cousins and himself shattered family harmony and caused in him a deep anger which he proceeded to express in a rather evocative (as well as provocative) way:

> In my mother's home town my grandmother and aunts had a party in my honour and several cousins were there. Perhaps these young relatives did not like to see so many amenities and favours showered upon me and sought means to have revenge. Discovering in some way that I disliked being called 'Indian', they seemed to think that they would be safe from punishment if they called this out in public. They made a mistake, for then and there, defying all the rules of grace and etiquette, I fought one after another until my aunts laid forceful hand upon me. Then the question was, 'What shall we do with him? Where shall we put him'? In those days there were a sort of 'holy of holies' in the 'big houses'. It was the parlor and it was usually kept closed and dark, from week-end to week-end. What

> wonderful haircloth furniture those parlors had, and heavy drapes hanging down in front of the great windows, and the wool or fuzzy ropes that tied those curtains and drapes back! It seemed to my aunts the only place for my incarceration, and so I was put in the parlor. All was quiet there for a while. Then there was a loud 'whack! whack! whack!' and the aunts hastened in to see what was happening. I had dragged the sofa from its moorings and placed the chairs in front of it. The sofa was my cariole and the chairs were my dogs. I had somehow got those curtain ropes off and had them around the chairs as dog harness and was using the curtain pole as a whip on the 'dogs'! My aunts quickly decided that it was better for me to pound my young cousins if they persisted in calling me names than to bruise their precious furniture. So I was permitted to rejoin my party.[38]

Soon thereafter, Egerton Young was appointed to Port Perry on the west side of Lake Scugog, and the family took up residence in its Methodist parsonage. At school there, Eddie was pursued by the "Indian" label and became very sensitive to the disparaging way in which the term was used (across the lake from Port Perry was an Ojibwa reserve, and the local white community, like many others near reserves, had its share of racial prejudice). It did not help much that the school's only two male teachers, the principal and assistant principal, showed interest in Eddie, saying that his English was better than that of the local people and asking him to translate words into Cree. When they were not present, Eddie's schoolmates "would point their fingers and say, Indian, Indian."[39]

Eddie's special background also set him apart when it came to school punishments. The "lady teachers," in particular, usually gave a naughty child blows with a bamboo rod or a strap until the recipient cried; but Eddie was a problem, for he didn't cry. One time he and three other boys were to have eight blows each with the strap for their misdeeds. Eddie was the last. It seemed to him "that the other fellows cried very easily, they didn't have any Little Mary to train them." Eddie took his blows from the woman teacher, then simply "looked her in the face. So she gave me eight more and still I looked at her, perhaps a little defiantly or scornfully as I remembered Little Mary."

Finally, as the teacher sat looking him over, she said, "I think you would like to be a gentleman." As Eddie recalled, "that was something different, I thought, than straps and it was something that mother had tried to instill into me as Mary did that of physical endurance." Eddie "listened carefully and humbly to what she had to say and told her I certainly did wish to be a gentleman, my eyes moistened with my repentance." Thereafter, that teacher disciplined him only by saying, "that is not gentlemanly or that

doesn't become a gentleman and she knew that it meant more to me than all the straps in the bellroom."[40] The incident was rich in meanings. Eddie had received from the two adult women in his life, his mother and Cree nurse, sets of concepts about "manliness" which were evidently congruent in some key ways. Control, self-restraint, a sense of independence, and a capacity to endure and stand up for himself seem to have been qualities that Eddie had deeply internalized. Little Mary had left her mark. But so too, no doubt, had the fact that in the northwest, Eddie had been his mother's first-born and only son, early having a certain freedom and responsibility, while being subject (in the manner of first-borns) to parental anxieties and high expectations. The Port Perry teacher finally saw that he already had a sense of self which only needed to be channelled and directed. Academically, he soon took top place among the boys in his class.[41]

The schoolyard harassments continued, however. Eddie's parents hoped that he would keep speaking Cree at home and retain his bilingualism, and Mr. Young urged that the family use Cree in its morning prayers. But Eddie had been too deeply injured. "I came to hate almost anything and everything that was Indian," he wrote, "and my usage on the school grounds seemed to be more and more unpleasant until one day in the fight my school bag was torn and slate broken." That evening his endurance cracked, and he fell to sobbing during his evening prayers. His father, hearing him, came to console him and they had a long and close conversation that strengthened the bond between them, and the son's religious convictions as well. Eddie vividly recalled the feeling it engendered: "No rebuke, no threat, only quiet understanding and inspirations, if my earthly father could actually speak like that, whatever must our heavenly father be like."[42]

In June of 1879, Egerton Young was given a new station at Colborne near the north shore of Lake Ontario. It was a new beginning for Eddie and he and the family temporarily let their years with the Indians drop from view: "There was no more talk about trying to keep up Cree in our morning prayers and nobody called me in school or out, 'Indian'."[43] In later decades, both the Young parents and their eldest son could and did speak and write about their experiences at the missions among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians. But it seemed that they at first had to affirm their own identity and standing in Ontario's country churches and schools so that no one could suspect them of being Indian or heathenized. A Colborne lady once said to the Youngs, "We do not want the returned missionaries here; they have lived so long among the heathens that they do not know how to appreciate the amenities of civilization."[44] There were pressures, it seems, on all of the fami-

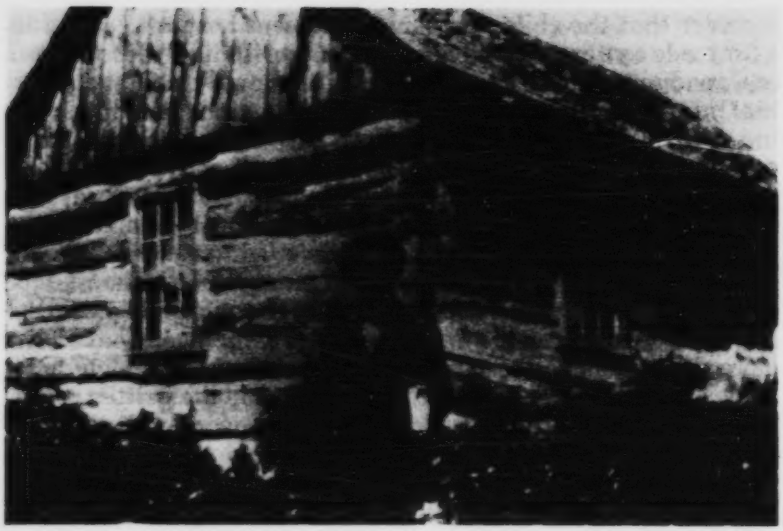
ly to "cover their tracks" during these first few years and camouflage their rich and instructive experiences at Norway House and Berens River. Eddie's exposure to "culture shock" in small-town Ontario was only the most traumatic and best recorded, he being in the most formative stages of his growth, and being of school age, the most exposed to harassment and the conflicting values of parents and peers.

The record of Eddie and Little Mary has not only its intrinsic human interest but a wider relevance for studies of the multifarious encounters and relationships between Northern Algonquians and people of European origin. With regard to missions, for example, we often tend to reconstruct missionary values and attitudes from their voluminous and accessible printed works, which were generated for a general or church audience, often a considerable period after the events they recorded, and tended greatly to simplify and romanticize the missionaries' experiences. We too seldom have private and personal records which focus on day-to-day Indian-white interactions in all their complexity, indeterminacy, and ambiguity, and which trace the growth of bonds among individuals. E. Ryerson Young, however, writing of his childhood, reminds us of these formative, on-the-ground relationships which were learning experiences for all involved, and without which no mission community could have been founded. Similarly, too, although formal mission history is largely a history of men, Little Mary, Mrs. Young, and other examples demonstrate that women's activities, support, and communication networks (Indian *and* white, in the instances of E.R. Young and other married Protestant missionaries) were fundamental to the households involved and to mission communities as they took shape.

Little Mary and Eddie also have much to suggest about the dynamics, complexities, and problems of fur trade familial relations. The recently developed field of research on traders and their native wives and children in the northwest has been handicapped by the lack of testimony from those wives and children.[45] The internal workings of these families, in which differing cultures and values met, melded, or conflicted in the intimate lives of individuals, were rarely recorded or revealed in any detail. The clues that we may gather from such a narrative as E. Ryerson Young's are therefore of great use. The working out in the Young household of such issues as the discipline and punishment of children, the character traits that were to be promulgated in them, and the modes of their enculturation and socialisation as males and females was a process surely parallelled in many a fur trader's household.

On the basis of Eddie's experiences, we also, perhaps, need to consider that the children of mixed descent born and raised in a fur trade context may have become more "Indian" (less British or Canadian) than we have sometimes assumed. Eddie, even with his Ontario-born mother constantly on hand, came close to maturing as an at least adequate Northern Algonquian, thanks mainly to Little Mary. Most traders' native offspring, typically unexposed to any women (or missionaries) from Europe or eastern Canada, would surely have been less bicultural than Eddie.

For those fur trade children who travelled to eastern Canada or Britain after an early upbringing in the northwest, the trauma of the transition (usually made without the mother's presence, and often occurring in the father's absence as well) may have been more severe than has been realised before. Two factors might have tended to reduce the visibility of such trauma in the written record (aside from the fact that few such children ever set down their experiences of these transitions). One may wonder how many of them had learned, like Eddie, to endure pain and stress in silence, in Northern Algonquian fashion. The other factor may have been that such children, and those relatives or friends who took them in, may have learned, like the Youngs in Colborne, to obscure as quickly and quietly as possible the youngsters' Indian heritage. The North West Company native children who were baptised in Montreal's St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church between the 1790s and early 1820s, for example, left the northwest at an average age of six, as did Eddie.[46] We do not know how they celebrated their seventh birthdays. But one fact is certain: we lose sight of the great majority of these children very quickly as they were quietly dispersed among the homes and schools of the Nor'Westers' relatives and friends. The only two categories of offspring who were traceable after baptism were those who turned up soon thereafter in church burial registers (one child out of every eight — a rate itself suggestive of some physical and mental trauma), and those few individuals who returned to the northwest to be marked as Métis or half-breed.[47] In eastern Canada (or Britain, for that matter), intermediate racial/ethnic categories were not operative, and strong pressures operated to quickly "whiten" children who brought from the northwest any sign of Indian behaviour, upbringing, and culture. Eddie's experience reminds us that these eastern prejudices went beyond matters of "race" and "blood," even if expressed in those convenient terms; there was no possible doubt about his white parentage.



E. Ryerson Young at one of his early preaching places, Portage House School, Lake of Bays, in the Muskoka district of Ontario, 1894-95. Collection: Jennifer Brown.

E. Ryerson Young learned to adapt and succeed in Ontario society; he had a long and respected career as a Methodist and United Church minister.[48] Little Mary and the years at Norway House and Berens River left profound personal impressions, however. When, as an old man, he reviewed his life, Little Mary was restored to prominence as a central and formative personage. It is unfortunate that social prejudices in eastern Canada operated so forcefully (as they continue to do in so many settings) to suppress the biculturalism of those children (whether white or of mixed descent) privileged enough to have learned wisdom, language fluency, and other skills from native women and men in the northwest as well as from their white parents and relatives. But we may be grateful that one such child, near the end of his life, felt compelled to put on record the details of his own experience with a Cree upbringing in Manitoba.

Notes

1 The earlier undated reminiscence, "A Missionary and his Son," consists of eighty-one typed pages and bears the Toronto address, 96 Cranbrooke Avenue, at which Young was living in the 1950s. Since he had lost his sight in the early 1940s, the text was probably typed by his assistant, Harry Smith. The second reminiscence, untitled and seventy-five typed pages in length, was probably dictated to Young's housekeeper at the same address, and was completed shortly before his death on 5 March 1962 at the age of ninety-two; a note on page one reads, "started Jan. 16/1962," and a statement on page seventy reads, "This is February 10/62. I am 92 years old and the only living Minister of my [ordination] class." The originals are in the possession of Young's son, the Reverend H. Egerton Young of Toronto, to whom I am most grateful for permission to use these texts. Other familial data, oral, written, and photographic, were also freely made available to me by H. Egerton Young, by Mr. and Mrs. R. Allen Young, and by Harcourt Brown. They have done all they could to ensure accuracy in personal and family history; any persisting errors of fact or interpretation are my responsibility.

2 The papers of the Reverend Egerton Ryerson Young Senior, many of which bear on this mission period, are in the Provincial Archives of Ontario in Toronto.

3 This article appeared in *The Indian's Friend*, a monthly publication of the Women's National Indian Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, vol. 10, nos. 6, 7, February and March 1898, and the manuscript is among the Young papers. Specific relevant books by E.R. Young are cited below.

4 E.R. Young, *By Canoe and dog-train among the Cree and Salteaux Indians* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1891), 262-64; *On the Indian Trail: stories of missionary work among the Cree and Salteaux* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897), 194-202.

5 Young, *On the Indian Trail*, 52-68.

6 Ibid., 174-86.

7 Elizabeth Bingham Young, "The Transformed Indian Woman" (manuscript), p. 4. The second half of this article also contains a battered wife story, with reference to an unconverted Berens River Saulteaux couple.

8 Neither the sources nor their interpretations afford an easy consensus on these matters. For studies affirming that Northern Algonquian women had roles of considerable importance in their communities and in social organization, see, for example, Eleanor Leacock, "Montagnais Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization," in Mona Etienne and E. Leacock, eds., *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Praeger, 1980); and Charles A. Bishop and Shepard Krech III, "Matriorganization: the Basis of Aboriginal Social Organization," *Arctic Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (1980): 34-35. Yet many fur trade and mission records detail incidents in which Northern Algonquian women suffered abuse and harm from males. Patterns of historical change may emerge as the records from the 1600s into the 1900s are scrutinised more closely for relevant data. It should also be noted that the battered woman was not necessarily a weak or subservient woman; we need further work on the nature of Algonquian male and female subcultures and gender relations and antagonisms.

9 Egerton Ryerson Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903); E. Ryerson Young, untitled reminiscence, pp. 9-10. See also, Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 4-5.
10 Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 31-34, 18; Young, untitled reminiscence, 11.
11 Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 34.
12 Young, untitled reminiscence, 11. See also, Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 6.
13 Young, untitled reminiscence, 11; See also, Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 41.
14 James G.E. Smith, "Western Woods Cree," in June Helm, ed., *Subarctic*, vol. 6 of *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 260, for example, discusses both the lack of leaders' coercive power over individuals' behaviour, and the absence of corporal punishment of children — patterns characteristic of Northern Algonquians generally.
15 Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 34-35.
16 Young, untitled reminiscence, 12.
17 Ibid., 28, from which the reconstructed dialogue is quoted. See also, Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 14-16.
18 Young, untitled reminiscence, 29. In "A Missionary and his Son," 18, Young described such episodes as recurrent.
19 Ibid. In *Algonquin Indian Tales*, E.R. Young portrayed Mary's responses to such situations in more dramatic terms: "If she could not have things exactly as she wanted them, Mary would now and then allow her fiery temper to obtain the mastery, and springing up in a rage and throwing a shawl over her head she would fly out of the house and be gone for days" (p. 35). Eddie's low-key description seems more convincingly in line with Northern Algonquian response patterns and etiquette. See, for example, 'Respectful Talk'," Regna Darnell, ed., *Proceedings of Conference on Native North American Interaction Patterns* (Ottawa: National Museums, 1985).
20 Young, untitled reminiscence, 12-13. See also, Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 16-17. The latter text linked this incident to the beginning of the senior Young's interest in Algonquian tales.
21 Young *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 60-61, 64-65, 67.
22 Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 37. For a history of the early fur trade in the Berens River area, see Victor P. Lytwyn, *The Fur Trade of the Little North: Indians, Pedlars, and Englishmen East of Lake Winnipeg, 1760-1821* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Centre, University of Winnipeg, 1986). John Maclean in *Vanguards of Canada* (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1918 pp. 124-25) noted an earlier Methodist contact with Berens River. Sometime between 1860 and 1862, Jacob Berens visited Norway House where he learned the Cree syllabics and was baptised by George McDougall. Young described his mission hopes for Berens River in a letter from Norway House misdated 27 January 1863 [1873?] (Papers, Archives of Ontario).
23 Young, untitled reminiscence, 27.
24 Ibid., 35; Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 124-27.
25 Egerton R. Young, manuscript copybook (Papers, Archives of Ontario), 123. In a letter of 7 April 1875 that Young wrote to Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris representing the Indians' need for tools and agricultural implements, Souwanas was described as Chief (Mary Black-Rogers, personal

communication, 1985). However, when Treaty Number 5 was signed on 20 September 1875, Nah-wee-kee-sick-quah-yash (Jacob Berens) signed as chief. Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and The North-West Territories* (Toronto, 1885).

26 Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 19, 31. For discussion and comparative references on Cree and Ojibwa myths and culture heroes, see Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman, introduction to *As My Informants Tell Me: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Thought* (forthcoming). Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 21-26, described Eddie's excursions with Jakoos.

27 Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 37.

28 Ibid., 31; see also p. 37.

29 Ibid., 237-38.

30 The Lake Winnipeg journals and reminiscences of North West Company trader George Nelson, covering the years 1807-13, document a non-violent but lively maintenance of boundaries between the two, particularly on the part of the Saulteaux (Nelson Papers, Metropolitan Public Library of Toronto). Nelson's fur trade papers are being prepared for publication by Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer S.H. Brown.

31 Young, untitled reminiscence, 34-35. See also, Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 53.

32 See Young, untitled reminiscence, 37-38 and Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 8-10, on Eddie's trapping. The story of Mr. Young's meeting Sandy Harte or Pe-pe-qua-na-pu-a at Nelson House where the boy lay crippled by a gunshot wound to his hip, and of the Youngs later taking him into their home at Rossville where he was educated and became able to return to his people as a teacher, was a favourite one in Young's later books. See, for example, Young, *On the Indian Trail*, 94-125; *Indian Life in the Great North-West* (London: S.W. Partridge and Co., no date), 9-49.

33 Young, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, 22.

34 Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 76-77.

35 Ibid., 78-80. See also, Young, untitled reminiscence, 35-37.

36 Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 81.

37 Young, untitled reminiscence, 38-39.

38 Young, "A Missionary and his Son," 44-45. See also, Young, untitled reminiscence, 39.

39 Young, untitled reminiscence, 39-40.

40 Ibid., 42. In this little room under the school belltower was "a big bookcase with a glass door. The shelves had been taken out and a rod fastened in there from end to end. This rod was decorated with instruments of torture of various lengths. At the left were two long bamboo rods and a raw hide whip with leather straps of various lengths and thickness some having several lashes" (p. 41).

41 Ibid., 42-43.

42 Ibid., 49.

43 Ibid., 51.

44 Ibid.

45 Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

46 Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Ultimate Respectability: Fur Trade Children in the Civilized World" in *The Beaver* (Winter 1977): 4-10, and *The Beaver* (Spring 1978): 48-55; "Children of the Early Fur Trades," in Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 54.

47 For several articles on the varied paths of such children towards or away from Indian or Metis identities and communities, see Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg/Lincoln, Neb.: University of Manitoba Press/University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

48 E. Ryerson Young's later life is sketched briefly in his untitled reminiscence, pp. 68-75.

Francis Beynon and *The Guide*

Anne Hicks

In 1918, when it seemed that World War I would go on for several years more, Francis Marion Beynon composed her response to a society that seemed mad with militarism.

Her home-front novel, *Aleta Dey*, was, in part, an attempt to inspire others who were skeptical about the sacred purpose of the war to come forward and say so. As well, in her book she offered an explanation of her own pacifist radicalization, including an individual's cradle-to-grave chronicle of the conformist institutions and oppressive elements in a society that spawned both her rebellious fictional protagonist and the jingoistic patriotism that Aleta Dey opposed. Like Francis, Aleta Dey was a Winnipeg journalist, a suffragist and a feminist, and if there was any reluctance on the part of her intended audience to identify Aleta with her creator, Francis unequivocally asserted the connection by giving Aleta features similar to her own, including auburn-coloured hair.[1]

Aleta Dey was published one year after the war ended by an eclectic and esoteric English social reform press. Among the other sixteen titles published by C.W. Daniel Co. of London that year were books on logic, hygiene, nutrition, psychic science and reconstructive medicine. There were the opinions of ex-tram conductor No. 317, the ruminations of an officer of the fleet, and the memoirs of a fox terrier.

As well, in 1919, Daniel Co. published a book of essays entitled *The Indictment of War* and a long, captioned work by Gilbert Sadler called *Reason-Love-Vision as the only power to overcome evil and construct the new social order.*[2]

It must have been gratifying to Francis to see her own book described by a somewhat surprised reviewer as "genuine" and "impressive" in the Christmas issue of the 1919 *Times Literary Supplement*, particularly since the latest book by popular American writer Kate Douglas Wiggan was dismissed on the same page as "slight" and "pretty."[3] However, according to another veteran of the *Times* condensed review pages — Vera Brittain — the *Times*'s Shorter Notices were also known as "a pauper's burial ground"[4] for books.

When *Aleta Dey* crossed the Atlantic and was rebound for sale in Canada by Thomas Allen Company in 1920,[5] it soon sank into

oblivion. The book was ignored by prominent Canadian magazines, and *The Grain Growers' Guide*, which had praised Nellie McClung's patriotic collection of essays, *The Next of Kin*, in December 1917, gave no review space in 1920 to the novel written by their former women's editor, Francis Beynon. This was not surprising given the divisive tensions that accompanied the demobilization of Canadian troops and the incredible human destruction the war had wrought. In 1920, there was very little open desire to probe what had happened.

Aleta Dey reveals a bright, rigorous intelligence, skillful craftsmanship and a conspicuous lack of complacency that distinguishes it from its predecessors, novels which were, at their worst, clarion calls to battle; at their best, ambivalent circuitous routes to sanctified human sacrifice in the front trenches. The book is also intriguing today because it vividly exposes the incisions in feminism and Christian social reformism that were split open by the war. For me, it possesses an eerie proximity to the present decade in its pervading sense of the erosion of democracy, the entrenched power of the privileged conservative right in society, and the incapacities of secular socialism.

Who was Francis Marion Beynon? Wendy Lill recently rekindled that question in her play, *The Fighting Days*, imaginatively and powerfully recreating the magnetic and uneasy relationship between Francis Beynon and Nellie McClung during the struggle for votes for women and the period of World War I.

That Francis Beynon became involved in the heady reform politics of pre-war Winnipeg is not surprising, given her family background. The youngest of the six children of James Beynon and Rebecca Manning who survived childhood, Francis Marion Beynon was born 21 May 1884 in Streetsville, Ontario, some twenty-five miles southwest of the gently rolling farmland and woodlots that had the village of Temperanceville in York County at its core. Temperanceville was first known as Love's Corners after its earliest inhabitants, James and Mary Mitchell Love.

Francis's great-grandparents, John Beynon, born John Bannon in 1773, and Jane Whitten, a Quaker, arrived in York County, Ontario from King's County, Ireland in 1819 with seven children, and by 1832, they and their now ten children were well-established on land near Love's Corners in King and Vaughan Townships of York County.[6]

The substitution of the Welsh name Beynon for Bannon upon their arrival in Canada is thought to represent a repudiation of Orangeism by John Beynon, who according to family lore had been a Master of the Orange Lodge in King's County, Ireland in 1815,

Francis Marion Beynon. Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

and came to Canada to escape threats upon his life.[7]

In Canada, the Beynons became staunch Wesleyan Methodists. As early as 1832 and in 1835, their names, including that of Francis's grandfather, appeared as officers and trustees of the Methodist church at Love's Corners.[8] Francis's paternal great-uncle, George Beynon, was accepted as a Methodist preacher in 1840, and travelled the eastern townships of Ontario as a circuit rider for twenty-five years. His son, Thomas, joined the ministry in 1877 and a cousin, Isaiah Beynon, was ordained in 1891, serving in the Toronto Conference.[9]

However, the most prominent Methodist ministers in the family were her mother's brothers, Henry, Thomas and Charles Manning. Together they gave 134 service years to the United Church of Canada; Charles serving ten of his forty-three years in the position of General Secretary of the Home Missionary Society.[10]

Temperance also ran like a brushfire through Francis's ancestors, most obviously on her mother's side. Francis's grandfather, James Manning, a prosperous early farmer of south Simcoe County, Ontario, and a class leader in the Methodist church, refused to allow liquor on his property — reputedly because of a family weakness for alcohol that had reduced his brother Joseph to a drunkard in the township. This abstemious attitude toward drink was not the prevailing one in south Simcoe, however, and according to the reminiscences of one of his sons, a heated argument broke out with neighbours gathered at the Manning farm, when James Manning refused to provide the customary grain liquor at the party that was to follow a barn raising on his property.[11]

Not surprisingly, Catherine Ann Scanlon, James Manning's second wife and Francis's grandmother, had prominent temperance connections in her brother John, a Methodist minister and a prohibitionist, a fiery platform speaker who served as Worthy Chief Templar of the Royal Templars of Ontario and took an active part in local liquor banning campaigns, as well as the campaign for prohibition throughout the province of Ontario.[12]

Francis may well have been revealing the source of her own first name when she informed a curious reader of *The Grain Growers' Guide* in 1912 that the American temperance crusader, Frances E. Willard, often spelled Francis with an "i" and that her own parents had registered her name that way.[13] Certainly, by the early 1880s, several years before Francis Beynon's birth, Willard had achieved fame in North America on the temperance lecture circuit, and was well-known as the president of the growing Women's Christian Temperance Union.[14]

Married in 1872, Rebecca and James Barnes Beynon soon left the conjunctive four townships in York County North and Simcoe County South where their ancestors had first settled and raised families in Canada. They moved to Streetsville, Ontario, and then, in 1889, fifty-four-year-old James and forty-two-year-old Rebecca left Ontario with their three daughters and four sons in search of the promise of an expansive West.[15]

Francis was just five years old when they arrived in the Cameron district of Manitoba, first renting the farm of James Hartney,[16] who had given his name to the small village nearby. However, their trek west was not without family precedent. In 1874, the Methodist church had sent Rebecca's brother, Henry, to the rebellious North-West, near Fish Lake, to minister to the Indians. During a particularly active period of unrest among the Metis, Manning abandoned his mission and removed his family to the nearby police post of MacLeod. A later church account casually notes that when he returned to Ontario in 1882, he was "somewhat broken in health."[17]

More happily, a cousin, George Beynon, established a law practice in Minnedosa in the 1880s, and went on to acquire the post of District Registrar of land titles in Portage La Prairie.[18] His brother, Thomas, had served as a Methodist minister in the Manitoba and North-West Conference since 1881, with missions near Hartney in settlements such as Meglund, Rapid City, and Virden.[19]

After their arrival in the Hartney district in 1889, Francis's parents soon established familiar patterns of life. Rebecca and several other women organised Sunday services in the district, since the distance to Whitewater and Meglund was too far to allow regular church attendance there. At these early gatherings, attended by neighbours who came on horseback or by wagon or stoneboat, the Bible was read aloud by one of the men, sometimes James Beynon, who would then interpret the passage as he saw it, and lead in prayer.[20]

Later, Rebecca taught Sunday school classes in her church and her strict standards about the observance of Sunday were reflected in her refusal to give her neighbours their mail on that day, from the provisional post office in her care on the Hartney farm.[21]

What was the effect of her parents' deep-rooted religiosity on Francis?

Its most obvious result was that Francis loathed the bigoted, dogmatic Methodism of her childhood. No doubt, Aleta Dey was also speaking for Francis when she recalls that the God of her

Sunday school class "wore an expression which I have since seen on the faces of stage policemen applying the third degree to a criminal";[22] or when she states that "my parents, with God as one of their chief instruments of terror frightened me into servility." "My mother," Aleta continues, "did it reluctantly, from a stern sense of Christian duty, but my father seemed to take a solid satisfaction in the work."[23]

Like her child protagonist, Francis revealed a precocious intellect early in her life, a characteristic that helped spark quarrels between her parents. In one of her columns for *The Guide* in 1914, on the subject of discipline Francis wrote:

> Looking back to my childhood I find that one of my earliest recollections is my father saying impatiently to my mother that she didn't know how to bring me up, and mother retorting angrily that she knew better than father did. . . . If mother slapped me or shook me as she often did, and father was present, he invariably took me in his arms . . . scolding mother while he petted me. If, on the other hand father whipped me, which, as I grew older, he did frequently, I had only to go to my mother to be told that father was a cruel tyrant . . . of my parents' many disagreements and disputes, [I am] certain [that] they destroyed that respect for parental judgement which should be the best guarded possession of a child's early years.[24]

Francis's tenacity of mind and purpose were not extinguished by strict discipline or conflict at home, and in 1898, when her mother was seriously ill with cancer, fourteen-year-old Francis still managed to achieve first standing in her eighth form class at school.[25]

According to her obituary in *The Hartney Star*, Rebecca Beynon was considered a cheerful Christian, ready to help anyone in the community, no matter what their religious convictions were.[26] If it were not so well known, the newspaper might have added that besides being a loyal Methodist, Rebecca was active in the local Women's Christian Temperance Union, an association in which many women first received valuable experience and set a precedent by organising for a cause that reached beyond the boundaries of their homes and into the legislatures of the country.[27] In the case of Hartney, temperance feeling in the district managed to block the licensing of liquor at the local hotel. For Francis and her sister Maude, it meant membership in the local Band of Hope.[28]

When Rebecca died in 1898, not Francis's father, but Manning, the eldest son, held custody of the family property, also working as a land agent and farm implements salesman in Hartney.[29] With the help of Lillian, the second eldest of the children, the remaining four siblings, including Francis, earned certificates to teach

"Canada Needs a 'Clean-up' Week." Cartoon in *The Grain Growers' Guide*, 12 May 1915, by Arch Dale.

school.[30] In 1902, when they left the district and moved their ailing father to Winnipeg, Lillian, William, Maude, Howard and Francis either held positions in rural schools or were qualified to earn their livings as teachers.[31]

Like her sister Lillian, Francis taught in rural schools near Carman, where she boarded with the family of local progressive, and Liberal candidate (1915), Eddie August.[32] When she migrated to Winnipeg in 1908, she found employment in the advertising department of the T. Eaton Company, becoming one of the first women in the West to take up advertising exclusively as a career.[33] By 1912, when Francis secured the position of first full-time women's editor of *The Grain Growers' Guide*, her sister Lillian, a writer on the *Free Press* staff for six years and a former student of fervent social gospel advocates such as Salem Bland and W.F. Osborne, had established her own name in social reform circles in Winnipeg, and when the Manitoba Political Equality League was formed in 1912, Lillian was elected first president of the Winnipeg chapter. Through *The Grain Growers' Guide*, the official organ of the Grain Growers' Association and a moderately radical voice from the soil, Francis added her voice to that of Lillian in the fight for women's suffrage, a dower law, labour saving devices

in the home, and homesteading rights for women, among other reforms.

As its first-full time women's editor from 1912 to 1917, Francis wrote and conducted "The Country Homemakers" page and another regular department called "The Sunshine Guild"; she secured and refereed space for the reports of farm women's associations, wrote an anonymous biweekly column called "Country Girl's Ideas," and conducted the children's page under the pen name "Dixie Patton," as well as producing the occasional feature article.[34] Wendy Lill's play, *The Fighting Days*, nicely captures the flavour and eloquence of Francis's writing in *The Guide*; Ramsay Cook's 1976 architectural essay, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," cogently summarizes the contents of Francis's columns and her editorial falling out with George Chipman over the war; and Carol Lee Bacchi's book, *Liberation Deferred?: The Ideas of the English-Canadian suffragists, 1877-1918*, gives a ground-breaking intellectual overview of women's suffrage and its advocates.[35]

Francis's direct connection with Manitoba was interrupted when she left Winnipeg in 1917 and spent much of the following two years writing her novel, *Aleta Dey*. After initially migrating to New York City, she went to work in Providence, Rhode Island, as a clerk for a trust company, where she was also ill in hospital for some time.[36] In 1922 she was hired as head of The Ways and Means Department of the Seamen's Church Institute, an Episcopalian Mission for sailors in New York City where her sister, Lillian, had been employed since 1918.

When Lillian left New York in June 1922 to return to Winnipeg, Francis also took over as editor of the Mission's monthly magazine, *The Lookout*.[37] She was attracted to Greenwich Village and lived in that district in the 1920s. My research indicates that she likely counted among her friends some of its inhabitants, notably A.V. Thomas's sister, who had worked as a secretary to the Fabian Society in London.[38] When Francis quit the Seamen's Church Institute in 1925, she may have hoped to earn her living as a freelance writer, and one of perhaps numerous pen names she used was "Ginty Beynon."[39]

In *Aleta Dey*, Francis's protagonist suffers a martyr's death for the cause of peace amidst an atmosphere suffused with the blood sacrifice of war. However, Aleta's lover, McNair, who had enlisted, returns home from the western front wounded but alive. Ironically, there is compelling evidence that Francis had a lover who was killed in World War I. Her sister, Maude, who named her eldest daughter after Francis and Lillian, also gave one of her sons the

names "Donald" and "Vernon" after Lillian's husband, A.V. Thomas, and Francis's fiancé (his surname unknown). According to family knowledge, Francis's Donald died as a soldier in the war.[40]

In one of her early columns in *The Guide*, Francis briefly mentions "my gentleman with the round, jolly face,"[41] and indirect references to a man appear in several other columns, including one of her last, in which in promoting the idea of conscription of wealth before men, she writes:

> Nearly all of us have, or did have, loved ones in the army. . . . That is not our sacrifice but theirs. That we have suffered almost unbearable anguish as a result is only incidental.[42]

I conclude with a passage from *Aleta Dey*. In it, Aleta has just learned that her lover, McNair, has been gassed and wounded.

> Three days passed in a vain effort to learn further details . . . Impotence is the peculiar sting of this particular form of ordeal, combined with uncertainty, which gives the tortured imagination free rein to create its own hell of horror.
>
> For three days and nights I traversed the battlefields of France. I found McNair in No-Man's-Land, with an arm blown off and gasping for breath; I dug him out from beneath a pile of dead bodies, between trenches, saturated with their blood and his own, which dribbled from the stub of his leg. I stumbled upon his half-naked body in the bottom of a trench, slimy with blood and crawling with vermin, and I raised him up to find half of his face was blown away and that he was stone blind.
>
> I walked alone at twilight over a deserted battlefield, and as I passed a certain place the evening breeze blew to me the smell of carrion, and I turned and looked and there were three black birds pecking at a long dark thing on the ground.
>
> Those were the lesser horrors that I dreamed — the things it is possible to put into words.[43]

Notes

1 Information received by the author in an interview with Mary M. Laing, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 13 July 1984. See also, M.M. Laing, "Francis Beynon Remembered," *Seniors Today* (Winnipeg) 3, no. 14, (4 April 1984): 4.

2 *The English Catalogue of Books*, vol. X, January 1916 to December 1920 (New York: Krause Reprint Corporation, 1963).

3 Review of Francis Marion Beynon, *Aleta Dey*, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 December 1919, 782. Review of Kate Douglas Wiggan, *Ladies-In-Waiting*, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 December 1919, 782.

4 Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933), 448.

5 J. Castell Hopkins, "Canadian Books of the Year," in *The Canadian Annual Review 1920* (Toronto: The Canadian Review Co. Ltd., 1921), 13.

6 Josephine Beynon Boos, *The Descendants of John Beynon* (Barrie, Ontario: by author, 1984).

7 Information received by the author in an interview with Josephine Beynon Boos at her home in Barrie, Ontario, September 1982, about the family lore surrounding John Beynon's life in Ireland.
8 Rev. Garnet W. Lynd, *Temperanceville United Church, commemorating a century and a quarter of Christian activity* (Aurora, Ontario: Banner Press, 1934), 2, 13.
9 Rev. George H. Cornish, "George Beynon" in *Cyclopaedia of Methodism in Canada* (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1881), 67. Rev. George H. Cornish, "Thomas Barnes Beynon," in *Cyclopaedia of Methodism in Canada*, vol. 2, 1881 to 1903 (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1903), 107. "Rev. R.B. Beynon Dies at Thornton," *The Observer*, 15 August 1942, 29.
10 "Rev. Henry M. Manning" in *The United Church of Canada, Bay of Quinte Conference Year Book and Record of Proceedings of the Thirteenth Conference, Smith Falls United Church, June 1 - June 6, 1937*, 44-45. D.N. McCamus, "Rev. Thomas Manning, D.D.," in *The New Outlook*, 8 November 1933, 798. "Late Rev. Charles E. Manning, D.D." in *The New Outlook*, 12 September 1928, 13.
11 Public Archives of Ontario, Memoirs of James Clarke Manning, MU 3797 #5, unpublished typescript, 4, 5.
12 "Rev. John Scanlon" in Benjamin F. Austin, ed., *The Prohibition Leaders of America*, (St. Thomas, Ontario: The Journal, 1895), 103.
13 *The Grain Growers' Guide* (heareafter known as *GGG*), 2 October 1912, 24.
14 Frances E. Willard (who as an adolescent preferred the name "Frank") was elected President of the national (American) Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1882 and World President in 1887. The Canadian WCTU was established in 1884, the year Francis Beynon was born.
15 Boos, *The Descendants of John Beynon*, 1-2, 4.
16 Hazel Parkinson, *The Mere Living* (Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen, 1957), 54.
17 Rev. Manson Doyle, "Pioneer, Pastor and Saint," in *The United Church Record and Missionary Review*, May 1937, 19.
18 "George William Beynon" in *Commemorative Biographical Record of the County of York Ontario, Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens and Many of the Early Settled Families* (Toronto: J.H. Beers Co., 1907), 158.
19 *Cyclopaedia of Methodism in Canada*, 1881 to 1903, 107.
20 Parkinson, *The Mere Living*, 54.
21 *The Hartney Star*, 12 December 1895, 3, and 15 January 1897, 1. Information received by the auther in an interview with Ken Adams of Alberta at Temperanceville, Ontario, 12 August 1984, partly concerning his grandmother as postmistress.
22 Francis Marion Beynon, *Aleta Dey* (London: C.W. Daniel Co., 1919), 29.
23 Ibid., 13.
24 *GGG*, 28 October 1914, 10.
25 *The Hartney Star*, 1 July 1898, 1.
26 Ibid., 15 April 1898, 1.

27 The Hartney chapter of the WCTU was formed in January 1893 and a delegate sent to the provincial conference. See "Manitoba Provincial WCTU" in *The Woman's Journal*, (July-August 1893): 7. *The Hartney Star* declared itself a strong advocate of temperance, regularly publishing "Temperance Notes" from the region. See, for example, *The Hartney Star* 1, no. 1, 23 February 1913, 17.

28 "Annual Report of the WCTU," in *The Hartney Star*, 8 June 1893, 1. Parkinson, *The Mere Living*, 96. Dixie Patton (Francis Beynon), "Young Canada Club," in *GGG*, 16 April 1913, 17.

29 Information received by the author in an interview with Frances Adams MacRae of Alberta, 24 July 1984. Manning Beynon's activities in land sales first surface in advertisements in *The Hartney Star*, 19 August 1898, 9, and his other sales ventures appear in the same manner throughout the next three years.

30 Letter from Willa Adams Andrews to Anne Hicks, 9 May 1980.

31 The Epworth League presented Manning Beynon with a watch chain — his father received an easy chair upon the family's departure from the district. *The Hartney Star*, 18 July 1902, 1. Some significant references to training and teaching posts obtained by the Beynons at this time appear in *The Hartney Star*, 11 January 1894, 9 August 1901, 16 August 1901, 1.

32 Interview with Mary M. Laing, 13 July 1984.

33 C.W. Parker, ed., *Who's Who in Western Canada* (Vancouver: Canadian Press Association Ltd., 1911), 109.

34 For the most important piece of evidence concerning the extent of Francis Beynon's contribution to the weekly, see "Bigger and Better," *GGG*, 13 October 1920, 43. This article enumerates those regular beats assigned to the women's editor and announces the addition of a staff writer to handle an increase in "women's content." The departments in question during Francis's career are the children's page by 'Dixie Patton,' called "Young Canada Club," and biweekly articles entitled "Country Girl's Ideas" which ran from 6 November 1912 to 7 May 1913 and were simply signed 'A Country Girl'. Francis was *The Guide's* first full-time women's editor, see Blanche Ellinthorpe, "From Teaching to Writing," *The Country Guide* (February 1953): 68. The children's columns, previously presented in various names and places in *The Guide*, became established on a particular page and bore a new tone and focus under Francis's direction, as well as a fresh name; see, "Why We Changed the Name," *GGG*, 26 June 1912, 14. 'Dixie Patton' was considerably less didactic than 'Uncle West' had been and displayed the kind of empathy for children that suffuses the first eighty-three pages of *Aleta Dey*. "Country Girl's Ideas" reveals the character and signature style of Francis Beynon, with the addition of themes similar to those expressed in "The Country Homemakers" page. It is difficult to conceive that Francis's predecessor on the Homemakers' page, Mary Ford, would have stayed on in a junior position. Her style was prescriptive and ethereal, she was single-mindedly concerned with promoting eugenics, and her parting column in "The Country Homemakers" expressed her strong distaste for class analysis politics (*GGG*, 5 June 1912, 10). Francis's successor, Mary McCallum, did not appear in *The Guide* until 22 August 1917, eight weeks after Francis officially departed, and the children's page soon underwent noticeable change. The author undertook a pilot statistical study of the authorship of "Country Girl's Ideas" based on the 'literary habits' method developed by D.P. O'Brien and A.C. Darnell in *Authorship Puzzles in the*

History of Economics (London: Macmillan, 1982). Preliminary results, based on their particular method, show statistically significant consistency with the literary habits of Francis Beynon.

35 Wendy Lill, *Fighting Days* (Vancouver: Playwrights, 1985); Ramsay Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," in Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

36 *The Providence Directory and Rhode Island State Business Directory*, no. 80 for the year commencing 1 May 1920. Ginty Beynon, "Overselling the Alien on the Promised Land," in *The Independent, A Weekly Journal of Free Opinion* 116 (20 February 1926): 212.

37 Letter from Edith G. Baxter to Anne Hicks, concerning Francis Beynon's employment at the Seaman's Church Institute, dated 16 September 1983. "Mrs. Thomas Leaves Us," in *The Lookout* (June 1922): 9.

38 Public Archives of Manitoba, Lillian Beynon Thomas Papers, Scrapbook. Telegram from Francis Beynon, Elsie Thomas, Janet Roper to Lillian Thomas, 6 May 1932. Letter from Mollie Barger to Anne Hicks concerning Elsie Thomas, dated October 1984.

39 Letter from E.M. Harsch of *The American Herdsman* to H.T. Burton of *McCall's Magazine*, dated 23 May 1927, concerning the poem "As A Man Prayeth" by Ginty Beynon, published April 1927 in *McCall's Magazine*, now in the possession of Patricia Beynon, Burnaby, British Columbia.

40 Letter from Frances Adams MacRae to Anne Hicks, 12 December 1980. Information received by the author in an interview with Frances Adams MacRae, 12 January 1982.

41 *GGG*, 11 September 1912, 12.

42 Ibid., 11 July 1917, 9.

43 Beynon, *Aleta Dey*, 204-5.

First Days, Fighting Days: Prairie Presswomen and Suffrage Activism, 1906-1916

Susan Jackel

In a 1975 study of British influences on Canadian suffrage activism, Deborah Gorham touched on the role of journalists in forming and disseminating suffrage ideology. Noting that women journalists were prominent in the suffrage leadership in two locales at least, Toronto and the prairie west, she went on to observe that "feminist journalists had links to other sorts of progressive activism," concluding that "these ties to urban reform and to the progressive farmers' movement strengthened women's activism, gave it support and also served to mould the direction it took."[1] More recently, Carol Bacchi in *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* has sought to provide statistical grounding for Gorham's observation, determining that fully one-quarter of her admittedly limited sample of 156 female suffrage leaders were journalists or authors, forming the largest single occupational category, well ahead of doctors or teachers.[2] Other scholars as well, among them Catherine Cleverdon, Ramsay Cook and Paul Rutherford, have looked in greater or lesser detail at women journalists' involvement in winning the vote for Canadian women.[3] The purpose of this article is to provide some of the specifics of that involvement by detailing selected circumstances, activities and interconnections among a particular group of turn-of-the-century Canadian suffragists-cum-journalists. Their unifying characteristic for the purposes of this article is their membership in a prairie region branch of the Canadian Women's Press Club (CWPC) between 1906 and the end of World War I.

Renamed the Media Club of Canada in 1970, the CWPC claims the longest continuous existence of any professional women journalists' organisation in the world. The occasion for the Club's formation was a trip by sixteen women journalists to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Their travel was arranged and paid for by the Canadian Pacific Railway's (CPR) director of publicity, George Ham, acting in response to a complaint by Margaret ("Miggsy") Graham of the Montreal *Star* that women journalists deserved no less in

the way of free railway passes and other perquisites than their male counterparts. Newly returned from escorting a party of Canadian pressmen to the Fair, the gallant Colonel Ham offered the same personal attentions to the ladies. He went even further, suggesting to the junketing newswomen that since they were excluded from membership in the all-male Canadian Press Club, they should form a professional organisation of their own. Thirteen women signed up on the spot and then conscripted Colonel Ham as honourary member and patron, a role he filled with gusto and unfailing generosity until his death in 1926.[4]

To a degree unusual among Canadian professional organisations and also among national women's organisations, the CWPC's formative years were dominated by individuals and branches located west of the Lakehead. Symptomatic of the vigour and importance of the prairie contingent was the fact that from 1906 to 1909 and then again from 1913 to 1920 the CWPC's national executive operated out of Winnipeg and Edmonton respectively. Well-known western Club members form almost a roll call of leaders in the women's movement both regionally and nationally; they include Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Violet MacNaughton, Cora Hind, Francis Marion Beynon and Lillian Beynon Thomas. Less familiar individuals also played key roles, notably Kate Simpson Hayes, Agnes Laut, Harriet Walker, Isabel Graham, Florence Randall Livesay, Valance Patriarche, Ethel Lindsay Osborne, Genevieve Lipsett Skinner, Kennethe Haig, Ethel Johns, Isobel Armstrong, Effie Laurie Storer, Elizabeth Bailey Price, Georgina Binnie-Clark, Katherine Hughes, Gertrude Balmer Watt, and Miriam Green Ellis. Yet these were only the core of more than one hundred women engaged in newspaper and magazine writing in the three prairie provinces before the end of World War I.

By definition women journalists were literate, articulate, opinionated individuals closely attuned to the currents of thought swirling around them. All wrote regularly and often voluminously for public consumption in the newspapers and magazines of the time.[5] In addition, some kept diaries or wrote memoirs; others produced fat file folders of correspondence; more often than not they published books of essays, sketches, short stories, novels, verse, or travel accounts. As a consequence, primary sources for a study of prairie presswomen constitute an embarrassment of riches, especially compared to the usual problems of written and photographic documentation attending the writing of women's history.[6]

The available primary sources are not only abundant but

rewardingly precise and detailed as well, particularly when it comes to recording the names, accomplishments, travels, friendships, and personal backgrounds of individual women journalists. Especially valuable in this regard are scrapbooks kept by several history-conscious Press Club members, the rise of news clipping services in 1910 radically simplifying the work of avid scrapbook-makers like Harriet Walker of Winnipeg, Elizabeth Bailey Price of Calgary, Evelyn Murphy of Edmonton and Effie Laurie Storer of Saskatchewan.[7] Another excellent source is the regular CWPC column of national and branch news that ran in the *Canadian Home Journal* in 1910-11, then switched to the *Canadian Courier*, only to fade from view part way through the war. There followed assorted short-lived attempts to replace the column with a Club newsletter, achieving success in the 1930s with the appearance of *Newspacket*. Finally, there are substantial deposits of minute books, membership lists, annual reports and branch correspondence at archives in Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa.[8] Varyingly systematic and comprehensive, these collections of clippings, minutes and other memorabilia testify convincingly to the determination of early presswomen to be heard from and remembered.

Presiding over the CWPC during its first two largely inactive years was the legendary Kathleen ("Kit") Coleman, monarch of "Kit's Kingdom" in the Toronto *Mail and Empire*. Born in Ireland in 1864, married at sixteen, widowed at nineteen, she emigrated to Toronto in 1884. Remarried, she lived for four years in Winnipeg; then on the sudden death of her second husband she moved in 1889 to Toronto with her two young children. The sole support of her family, she broke into journalism with several articles for *Saturday Night*, moving soon afterward to the *Mail and Empire* to write for and edit the women's page. In the words of one biographer,

> for 21 years [Kit] . . . wrote on penal reform, prostitution in Toronto, abortion, the press, divorce, sex (disguised as columns on Platonic Love), environmental pollution and conservation, racism, Western imperialism, technological change, inflation and how to fight it, the right of women to take any job (which she supported) and woman's suffrage (which she opposed).[9]

By 1904 Kit Coleman and Robertine Barry ("Francoise") of Montreal were the two recognised stars of Canadian women's journalism, their preeminence being acknowledged in the choice of Coleman as the Press Club's founding president in 1904-06 and Barry's election in 1907-08.

Canadian Women's Press Club. Annual Meeting, Winnipeg, 1906. Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Another prominent figure in the CWPC's early history was Kate Simpson Hayes, who published under the pen-name "Mary Markwell."[10] A native of New Brunswick, the twenty-three-year-old Hayes moved west to the tiny Territorial settlement of Prince Albert in 1879. Following a short-lived marriage she settled with her two children in Regina in 1885. There she founded a literary and musical society, served as Territorial legislative librarian, and wrote for the *Regina Leader*, founded in 1883 by her long-time companion and father of her two younger children, Nicholas Flood Davin. Hayes was a committed suffragist, and her influence prompted Davin to introduce an 1895 bill in Parliament in favour of extending the franchise to women. She was also serious about literature, and claimed with pride that her *Prairie Pot-pourri*, a collection of verse, sketches and short fiction printed in Winnipeg in 1895, was the first literary work written and edited for publication in the Territories.

Sometime in the middle or late 1890s Hayes left Regina to take up free-lance journalism in Winnipeg, and in 1899 she became women's editor of the Manitoba *Free Press*. As luck would have it, however, she was in Toronto working as George Ham's secretary that June day in 1904 when Miggsy Graham stopped by to voice her demand for equal treatment of women journalists in the matter of railway passes to the World's Fair. Between Graham and Hayes, the Colonel hardly stood a chance.[11] Hayes

joined the St. Louis expedition and became the CWPC's first secretary.

By 1906 Hayes was back in Winnipeg again working for the *Free Press*. Her friend and colleague Cora Hind records that Hayes was the prime mover behind a meeting that June of Canadian women journalists that seems to have catalyzed the infant Press Club and averted its early demise through inactivity and dispersion. Once again George Ham came through with private Pullman cars to transport eastern Canadian and visiting American newspaperwomen to the fabled Gateway of the West. One clipping book contains a revealing little squib, of the *plus ça change* variety, exhorting Canadian women journalists to take out a CWPC membership for two dollars, the bait being travel to Winnipeg at the CPR's expense. The lure was effective; forty-four women attended and were welcomed and feted by the cream of Winnipeg's civic establishment. At the conclusion of the three-day meetings visitors and hostesses boarded two private railway coaches for a return excursion to Banff. En route they composed copy for a four-page tabloid entitled *The Sunset Echo*, named after a Pullman car, tendering it for speedy typesetting and printing during a half-day stopover in Calgary. Its irreverent jibes and jingles convey the distinct impression of high-spirited women kicking over the traces of work and family in comradely and mildly wicked fun. But if there was fun, there was work as well: in the words of CWPC historian Kathleen Mathers, "At each stop there was entertainment on a large scale, and thousands of words were later written about the Canadian West."[12] For the CPR it was all excellent publicity of the kind routinely sought from parties of male journalists during those boom years of western settlement. For CWPC members, the 1906 meetings and excursion cemented a number of long-lasting friendships while consolidating their self-awareness as professionals. They were no longer lady journalists; they were presswomen.[13]

With its more secure establishment at Winnipeg as a formal organisation, the CWPC began facing necessary questions of structure, procedure and purposes. A national executive was formed to plan annual (after 1910 triennial) meetings, establish fees and conditions of membership, and act as a clearinghouse for branch news. Here again Winnipeg members took the initiative, steering the fledgling organisation through its first three operational years. It transpired that Kate Simpson Hayes, elected to succeed Kit Coleman as president in 1906, left Winnipeg soon after to take up publicity work in England on behalf of the CPR, but her CWPC duties were ably assumed by Ethel Lindsay Osborne, who presided

at the annual meeting of 1907. She and other Winnipeg members also filled in for Robertine Barry, CWPC president in 1907-08, who spent most of her term of office in France. In 1908 Osborne was elected national president, and Harriet Walker returned for the third of four successive terms as corresponding secretary; Walker's energetic work on behalf of the organisation was recognised in her election as honourary CWPC president in 1910.[14] By that year national membership in the club stood at 120, of whom eighteen were in Winnipeg; two years later Winnipeg branch membership reached a remarkable thirty-three.[15]

Initially membership in the CWPC required some regular attachment, whether as salaried staffer or syndicated free-lancer, to a newspaper or magazine. In 1910 the national membership committee headquartered in Toronto circulated recommendations for stiffer eligibility critieria. The proposed amendment to the constitution read: "Any applicant for member as a journalist should have held a salaried position on some reputable publication, or should have been engaged in paid work as a regular contributor to one or more such publications, for at least six months before becoming eligible for membership." This proposal occasioned warm discussion among the executive of the Winnipeg branch, who upon receipt of the recommendations from "our Eastern sisters" called a special business meeting. Objecting on the grounds that the changes "would exclude too many valuable members," Winnipeggers recommended instead that membership be open to any woman writer who was the author of a published book, and to illustrators in black and white.[16]

It was an issue on which Winnipeggers were especially sensitive that fall, having recently made the acquaintance of an emerging Manitoba writer who, although the author of a published book, was not a regular contributor to newspapers or magazines. The CWPC minute books record that "early in February [1910], Mrs. Nellie L. McClung of Manitou was the guest of honor at a tea given by Mrs. R.L. Osborne at her home. The members enjoyed meeting the bright little authoress of 'Sowing Seeds in Danny'." Fifteen months later in May 1911 the McClung family moved to Winnipeg; on 26 October CWPC minutes note an application for branch membership on hand from "Mrs. Nellie McClung, who is already a Dominion member." By this time on friendly terms with many of Winnipeg's journalistic community — on 6 March 1909 she was a well-received guest of the Quill Club[17] — McClung was elected CWPC branch president on the spot (later she would be a member and sometime president of branches in Edmonton and Calgary).

Following three years in the hands of Winnipeg members, the

national executive's removal to Toronto in 1909 might well have signalled a permanent shift eastward in leadership. Remarkably, this did not happen. After four years under Marjorie MacMurchy, founding president of the Toronto branch, the national executive returned to the west, this time to Edmonton. Although new and very small, the city of Edmonton in 1913 had all the optimism and large ambitions of a budding prairie metropolis. Incorporated in 1904, it amalgamated with neighbouring Strathcona in 1912; their combined population in 1911 was just over thirty thousand, well and amply served by three dailies, the *Bulletin*, *Journal*, and *Capital*, the biweekly *Plaindealer*, and three weekly papers, the *Saturday News*, *Alberta Homestead*, and *Le Courrier de l'Ouest*.[18]

Among the city's many journalists were two veterans of the Canadian presswomen's 1904 jaunt to St. Louis. One was a reporter from Montreal, Katherine Hughes, who joined the staff of the Edmonton *Bulletin* in 1906 and two years later accepted a post as provincial archivist, publishing a much-acclaimed biography of Father Lacombe in 1911.[19] Hughes served as recording secretary of the national CWPC in 1906-7. The other was Gertrude ("Peggy") Balmer Watt, resident of Edmonton since 1905 and an alumna of the Woodstock *Sentinel*. Editor of the women's page on her husband's *Saturday News* and *Capital*, she was also for a brief period in 1912 the proprietor, editor, and chief writer for her own newspaper for women, the *Mirror*.[20] Peggy Watt was especially active in the early years of the CWPC, travelling east to Winnipeg in 1906 and 1908 to attend the annual meetings there; she held the position of national treasurer in 1906-7. In 1909 she and Cora Hind were the only two western members to attend the association's meeting in Toronto. The founder of the Edmonton CWPC branch in 1908, Watt was the only survivor of the original thirteen charter members to celebrate the Club's fiftieth anniversary in 1954.[21]

Although membership in the Edmonton branch stood at fourteen by 1910, minute books record little activity at first. However, as Elsie Park Gowan later recalled, "In 1910 Emily Murphy was admitted to membership, and her fighting spirit became our dynamic." Club records concur, as do columns of the city's newspapers around that time, for wherever she went Mrs. Murphy contrived to be news.[22] It was she who in 1913 conceived and organised another legendarily successful meeting of the national CWPC in Edmonton, with free train transportation as well as a memorable trip through the Rockies laid on by the ever-obliging George Ham. One hundred and three presswomen attended and

were billeted in the homes of members of Edmonton's Women's Canadian Club, of which Emily Murphy fortunately happened to be president.[23] Elected president of the national CWPC as well, Murphy served seven rather than the expected three years when war intervened, retaining leadership of the organisation until 1920.

The branch histories in the 1954 Golden Jubilee *Newspacket* give the impression that Saskatchewan involvement in the CWPC came later, beginning with the organisation of a Saskatoon branch in 1926 and its reorganisation in 1930. There is no mention of a Regina branch, yet it would appear that one did exist briefly before World War I, for a CWPC column in the 1911 *Canadian Courier* alludes to "the Regina branch" and names four executive members, Mrs. T.J. Bennett, Mrs. Murdoch MacKinnon, Miss Isabel C. Armstrong and Miss Mae Currie. An undated clipping from the same source, also assignable to 1911, notes that Regina CWPC members were hostesses at lunch to a group of visiting presswomen from Winnipeg that included Mrs. McClung, Mrs. Graham, Miss Beynon, Miss Hind and Miss Lediard.[24] Other Saskatchewan members around this time, either belonging to the Regina branch or affiliated directly with the national organisation, were Effie Laurie Storer of Battleford, Moose Jaw and Regina, and Georgina Binnie-Clark of Fort Qu'Appelle.[25] Of the latter, the *Canadian Courier* column notes on 20 January 1912 that "Miss Georgina Binnie-Clark, the English author, one of the recent acquisitions to the membership of the CWPC, gave a most interesting address on 'Farming for Women'" to a December 1911 meeting of the Fort William-Port Arthur Women's Press Club. Binnie-Clark was one of the small number in attendance at the 1908 CWPC annual meeting in Winnipeg; between 1910 and 1913 she was entertained by branches in Fort William-Port Arthur, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver, as well as points east.[26]

Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung were early guests when a CWPC branch was formed in Calgary in 1912 at the initiative of Mrs. Frank Jacobs, assistant editor of the *Farm and Ranch Review*. Although the branch had only six members at the outset, within a year the number had risen to twenty-one.[27] A Vancouver branch founded in 1909 showed the same rapid growth, boasting twenty-one members in 1912 and close to forty by 1920.[28] When Miriam Green Ellis of Edmonton organised a regional conference in 1920 she found between sixty and seventy women actively engaged in journalism in Alberta and Saskatchewan alone.[29] When this number is added to the forty-odd CWPC members in

Manitoba and the closely-allied Lakehead cities, the figure cited earlier of more than one hundred women journalists working in the western interior region during this period seems conservative.

From the outset the aims of the CWPC were both social and professional. Members looked to it to defend and advance the interests of women in journalism and to encourage high standards of newspaper and magazine writing.[30] Socially, branches prided themselves on their hospitality to visiting women of note, and to fellow writers and journalists passing through town. Thanks to the telegraph and telephone connections of their newspaper offices, women journalists could convene a luncheon at a few days' or even a few hours' notice.[31] Some clubs specialised: the Calgary club, for example, announced on its formation that it intended to further the cause of literature, especially Canadian literature; its first project was a study of Canadian women writers.[32] As ever, Winnipeggers concentrated on politics; they gravitated naturally, Genevieve Lipsett reported, to "any woman who is doing something for the uplift of the sex."[33]

With access to free travel, courtesy of George Ham, and to the hospitality and support of colleagues from coast to coast, CWPC members were increasingly well-positioned to develop and promulgate views on national issues, and with remarkable frequency those views bore on "the uplift of the sex." We see this development reflected in the careers of people like Pauline Johnson, Agnes Laut, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Agnes Deans Cameron, Marshall Saunders, Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung. The CWPC column in the January 1911 *Home Journal*, for example, reported on Saunders's cross-country trip of the previous fall, noting that "she was able to tell members of the club from Victoria to Ottawa about playgrounds, and the care of birds, as well as incidents of authorship." Asked by members of the Winnipeg branch, to whom such distinctions mattered greatly, "whether she was a 'gist' or a 'gette', Miss Saunders said she was an ardent supporter of any movement for the rights of the weaker ones of the earth, whether they be dumb animals or women and children."[34] Then there was the case of Agnes Deans Cameron, who before her sudden death in 1912 was most noted for her travels in the north, and her outspoken advocacy of equal pay for women teachers. For her pains, she had her teaching certificate in British Columbia suspended in 1906, whereupon she turned to journalism, lecturing, and publicity work for the west and north. The accolade of a friend and competitor, Harriet Walker of Winnipeg, is significant: "Aside from being a clever author," Walker wrote, "Agnes is one of the best advertisers I ever saw. I was her press agent

once, and consider it an honor. I am also vain enough to consider myself a fairly good press agent, since that is my business for our Walker Theatre interest, but Agnes has me beat to a 'frazzle'."[35]

This element of carefully cultivated press-agentry is far from irrelevant to the political fortunes of reform leaders like Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung. They too learned to use to their advantage membership in a professional organisation that guaranteed them sympathetic publicity as well as reliable hospitality from coast to coast. Whether the purpose of their travels was a reading from their own works, or a lecture in the interests of reform, or, as often happened, both at once, their presence in town was well advertised beforehand and well reported upon afterwards, in phrases that generally included the adjectives *bright, witty, clever, sparkling, magnetic,* and *well-known.*

Hospitality and travel, then, brought new contacts and friendships to CWPC members, broadening horizons and reinforcing the sense of shared purposes and interests fostered by Club meetings, the exchange of branch news in the regular CWPC column and the strategic deployment of newspaper reports of members' accomplishments. This collegial connection and support, further sustained by an elusive web of telegrams, telephone calls, and personal correspondence, was vitally important to early twentieth-century prairie presswomen, for whom the separation imposed by distance was a lived reality. Yet there were other links as well that extended and reinforced their sense of speaking to, and for a growing constituency of Anglo-Canadian women. Not content to rely on their professional association alone, presswomen in prairie cities and farming communities took steps to establish contacts with women in the communities around them through membership in a wide variety of volunteer organisations. Conspicuous among them were the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Women's Institutes, the Women Grain Growers' Associations, the United Farm Women of Alberta, the University Women's Club, the Women's Canadian Club, and the local and national Councils of Women, in addition to literary, cultural, religious and political societies of many kinds.[36] Readers familiar with the social history of this period will know these organisations well, and will expect a considerable degree of overlap in membership between presswomen's and other women's clubs. They may be surprised, and perhaps also amused on occasion, to observe the strategic purposiveness and intricacy of these interconnections, as the following instances suggest.

The key roles played Cora Hind, Lillian Beynon Thomas and Francis Marion Beynon in organising Women's Institutes

throughout Manitoba, Countrywomen's Clubs in Saskatchewan, and Women Grain Growers' Associations in both provinces, have long been recognised and need no elaboration here beyond simple reminder of all three groups' ready and influential support of female suffrage. Similarly well known is the long-time association of Cora Hind and Nellie McClung with the WCTU, another organisation long active in the cause of suffrage. More limited in impact, but still significant, was the collaboration of several Winnipeg women journalists with their male colleagues in the Direct Legislation League. Nor should we overlook the short-lived Quill Club of 1908-9, whose members comprised journalists of both sexes. According to Florence Lediard, CWPC member and Quill Club recording secretary, the topic of women's suffrage was discussed "most *profitably*" at the club's penultimate meeting in the fall of 1909.[37]

Canadian Women's Press Club. Clubroom, c. 1912. Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Just possibly it was being discussed elsewhere too, for in April 1909, several months before the Quill Club's demise, the University Women's Club of Winnipeg was formed. Among its founding members were *Free Press* writer Kennethe Haig and active Quill

Club member Lillian Thomas, both mainstays of the Winnipeg CWPC. Meanwhile, two of their closest CWPC colleagues, Harriet Walker and Ethel Lindsay Osborne, were taking a leading part in the affairs of the Winnipeg Women's Canadian Club, which they had helped found late in 1907. Soon boasting the largest Women's Canadian Club membership in Canada with 550 members, the Winnipeg branch elected Osborne as its president in 1910 and again in 1912.[38]

As their contacts widened and their potential base of support grew, so too did the confidence of reform-minded women journalists that the moment had arrived to take the suffrage campaign into the open. As many readers of Nellie McClung's autobiography will recall, it was in the presswomen's clubroom in the Winnipeg Industrial Bureau that "the seed germ of [Manitoba's] suffrage association was planted." With Ethel Osborne in the chair, and Lillian Thomas chosen first president, the Political Equality League (PEL) was launched at Jane Hample's house on 29 March 1912.[39]

The following September the PEL, whose leading spirits included CWPC members Nellie McClung, Cora Hind, Kennethe Haig, Lillian Thomas, Francis Marion Beynon and Ethel Osborne, moved that a letter be sent to fifteen local organisations, including the CWPC, the University Women's Club, and the Women's Canadian Club, enquiring discreetly as to their views on women's suffrage. A few weeks later the Winnipeg CWPC held its annual meeting, where it is recorded that "with the president, Mrs. R.L. McClung in the chair, the secretary submitted a letter from the Political Equality League in which they asked the Club to express an opinion on this question and offered to send a speaker to address one of our meetings. The secretary was instructed to reply that we as a branch of the central organisation could not express any opinion but would be pleased to accept the offer of a speaker."[40] Whether the PEL's proferred speaker actually attended a subsequent CWPC meeting, or Madame President merely changed hats for the occasion, is not on record.

In a parallel instance, the University Women's Club of Winnipeg gave support to several movements spearheaded by local women journalists. At a 24 November 1911 executive meeting, for example, "it was also decided that the Club add its influence to the homestead measure," an allusion to a campaign to extend homestead rights to women then at its height under the leadership of CWPC members Isabel Graham and Lillian Thomas. Also under discussion that fall was a proposal that the club sponsor a visit and lecture by Emmeline Pankhurst, in Canada on a fund-

Harriet Walker, 1921. Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

raising tour. At a general meeting on 10 November the decision to invite Mrs. Pankhurst was approved; on 14 December it was

"Moved by Miss Hind, seconded by Miss Jones, that if the Club were given a choice of subjects for Mrs. Pankhurst's lecture, the subject should be 'The Englishwoman's Fight for the Vote'."[41]

Two years later club members found themselves confronting the consequences of their daring, for as Nellie McClung recorded in her autobiography, Emmeline Pankhurst's visit "created a profound impression" on Winnipeg women.[42] At a general meeting of the University Women's Club in November 1913, "A letter was then read from the Civic Committee of the Political Equality League asking for the co-operation and support of the University Women's Club in the formation of a Woman's Civic League." Lillian Thomas, founding member of the CWPC and the PEL's first president, and Dr. Mary Crawford, PEL charter member and founding president of the University Women's Club, both spoke in support of the proposed new organisation, and "after considerable discussion" the University Women's Club pledged its cooperation.[43]

But speakers, whether local or imported, were not the only source of unsettling ideas for Winnipeg clubwomen. Radical books circulated as well. Both Francis Beynon and Nellie McClung, for instance, were well-acquainted with Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* (1911), the evidence residing in Beynon's extended comments on the book in the 10 July and 31 July 1912 editions of the *Grain Growers' Guide* and in McClung's free adaptation of several passages from Schreiner for use in *In Times Like These* (1915).[44] Another Winnipeg admirer of Schreiner was Abby Lyon Sharman, who held a doctorate in English literature and history from the University of Chicago. Upon arriving in the city in or around 1910 Mrs. Sharman became a leading member of the University Women's Club, at the same time acquiring a considerable reputation as a book reviewer for local and national papers. In the fall of 1912, some eight months after the PEL's formation, Sharman succeeded Nellie McClung as president of the Winnipeg CWPC. It was she who, according to 26 February 1914 CWPC minutes, "guilelessly suggested that books might be lent to the [CWPC] library, citing as an example to be emulated the loaning of 'Woman and Labor' by Mrs. Perry."[45]

In their pooling of information, support and tactical expertise, Winnipeg women were clearly laying the necessary foundations for effective political action. Lest it be supposed, however, that Manitoba women held a monopoly on "guileless" strategy, evidence abounds that women in other prairie cities were watching the Winnipeg activists closely for tips on forming constituencies of their own. A detailed demonstration of the prairie network

in action must await another occasion; here a single instance, drawing on the activities of one of Canada's best-known reform leaders, Emily Murphy, must suffice.

For the most part Emily Murphy tends to be associated in the public mind either with the province of Ontario, where she was born in 1868 and lived until age thirty-five, or more commonly with Alberta, her home for the last quarter-century of her life. There was, however, an interlude from 1903 to 1907 when Emily and Arthur Murphy lived in Swan River, Manitoba, some two days' train travel northwest of Winnipeg. Murphy was by this time a well-established journalist and author; she wrote regularly for several Canadian magazines, was literary editor of the *Canada Monthly* (1902-4), and had just published a lively and personable travel book, *The Impressions of Janey Canuck Abroad* (1902). During her four years in remote Swan River she continued with her writing, assembling the sketches that would eventually become the best-selling *Janey Canuck in the West* (1910). She also wrote regular book reviews for the Winnipeg *Tribune*, acting as its literary editor from 1904 to 1912.[46] Even after her family's removal to Edmonton in May 1907, Murphy kept in touch with former Winnipeg acquaintances, writing for example in December 1907 to executive members of the newly formed Winnipeg Women's Canadian Club requesting information about the club's purposes and asking for a copy of the constitution.[47]

The constitution would be filed away for four years. In the meantime Murphy consolidated her position as a leader of organised womanhood in Edmonton, all the while maintaining regular communication with reform-minded women journalists in Winnipeg and elsewhere. The list of visitors entertained on a quasi-civic basis by the Edmonton CWPC between 1909 and 1911 (Murphy took out formal membership in 1910) is suggestive: guests included Mrs. George Cran, Miss B. Pullen-Burry, Mrs. Dunnington-Grub, Marshall Saunders, Agnes Laut, Pauline Johnson, Agnes Deans Cameron, Georgina Binnie-Clark and Nellie McClung.[48] Despite living in different cities Nellie and "Janey" became especially close friends, writing to one another, reading and reviewing each other's books, and exchanging visits whenever possible.

Recalling the flurry of women's organising in Winnipeg around this time, and keeping Murphy's numerous Winnipeg connections in view, one reads with interest but little surprise an item in the 26 October 1911 Edmonton *Journal* concerning the agenda of a Local Council of Women meeting scheduled for that afternoon. Anne Merrill, the *Journal*'s women's editor, reported, "Mrs. Arthur Murphy, always a leading spirit in the affairs of women, is

bringing in a resolution that a committee [of the Local Council] be appointed to draft a constitution for a Women's Canadian Club in Edmonton." She continued editorially, "With Mrs. Murphy at the back of this movement it means that such a club will be formed here immediately." The next day Merrill elaborated:

> The formation of a Women's Canadian Club will be a very popular move here, as the need for such a club has been steadily growing. Mrs. Murphy, in bringing in her resolution, commented on the fact of so many distinguished visitors coming to Edmonton from time to time, who are entertained, if at all, only by the Women's Press Club, which has not more than four or five active members, and therefore a great many of the women of Edmonton who would appreciate an opportunity of showing some hospitality, in a semi-public way, have been unable to do so.

Who those "four or five active members" were, incidentally, may be surmised with some accuracy from a *Journal* column of two months before, when Merrill reported on a "jolly little luncheon . . . at the Blue Moon Tea Room" given by the Edmonton CWPC for Miss Pullen-Burry of London, England. Hostesses at the affair were Mrs. Arthur Murphy, Mrs. Balmer Watt, Mrs. Beaufort, Miss Katherine Hughes and Mrs. Forsyth.[49]

On 1 November, Merrill reported with some satisfaction: "As prophesied in this column the other day that if Mrs. Murphy were at the back of a movement to form a Women's Canadian Club in Edmonton, it would go through with despatch, a Canadian Club for Women has been organised. It happened yesterday." Elected to the first executive were Mrs. Arthur Murphy, president, Miss Katherine Hughes, literary-secretary, and Mrs. A.B. Watt, executive committee member. At its first meeting the executive moved to adopt the constitution of the Winnipeg Club, which Emily Murphy had prudently procured four years earlier.[50]

But the Winnipeg connection does not end here, for in light of Murphy's well-known sympathy for suffragism it is difficult to believe she had not got wind of plans under discussion in Winnipeg since late October to bring Emmeline Pankhurst west. In any event, Anne Merrill's 18 December column informed Edmontonians: "Mrs. Pankhurst, the famous suffragist, was in Winnipeg yesterday on her way to the coast. There is the possibility of her coming to Edmonton; and if she does, it would be a good move for the newly-organised Women's Canadian Club of Edmonton to have their inaugural luncheon during Mrs. Pankhurst's stay here, and invite her to be its first speaker."

For whatever reasons, this project did not materialize, and it was left to Murphy herself to address over two hundred Edmonton

Media Club of Canada: Emily Murphy at left, next to Emmeline Pankhurst and two unidentified women, c. 1920. Collection: Public Archives of Canada, MG 28 I 232.

women at the 20 January 1912 inaugural meeting. With or without Mrs. Pankhurst on hand, the Edmonton Women's Canadian Club does seem to have fulfilled the object Murphy had in view for it, which was to draw larger numbers of the city's women into discussions of public affairs. By the end of its first year club membership stood at 265, out of a total female population of some thirteen thousand in Edmonton at the time.[51] Giving her first annual report as founding president, Murphy thanked her executive and then went on to express the club's "indebtedness to the newspapers of Edmonton for the publicity which they have given to our work during the year. Not only has it helped us in an organisation but it has enabled the people of the city to consider the questions that have engaged our attention, thus enlarging our sphere of usefulness to a very considerable extent."[52]

Murphy's remarks and the context in which they were delivered raise a host of important questions, each deserving thorough consideration in its own right. Who precisely were her auditors, and what questions engaged the club's attention, that year and in years to come? Did the linkages between journalists and reform leadership in Edmonton — or in Regina, Calgary, and other prairie

centres — follow closely the Winnipeg pattern, or can we already discern distinctive political cultures at work in the three prairie provinces? If so, where do individual reform leaders fit into the equation? Why was it, for example, that Emily Murphy, active in so many women's clubs on the one hand and so many reform and social welfare issues on the other, spoke and wrote openly of her unequivocal support for the suffrage cause but never served on the executive of any group exclusively concerned with suffrage activism?

The questions multiply, and the answers, when they come, spawn new puzzles to solve. Yet even with so tentative a framework to build on, it seems possible to venture a few concluding observations. One is that prairie women activists knew what they were about as they constructed their widening network of clubs, societies, leagues, associations, and affiliations with national and regional organisations. Second, women writers and journalists were characteristically at the nerve centre of this network, drawing on their professional access to public debates and personages, using to effect the most recent developments in communications, and extending their knowledge and influence out into the community, through their writing but also through their social relations with other women. Third, it is evident that prairie presswomen believed in and took satisfaction from their ability to mould not only the day-to-day events of their own generation but also the social and political structures within which future generations of prairie dwellers would live their lives.

Francis Marion Beynon's profession of faith on that score is well known: in the *Grain Growers' Guide* early in 1913 she wrote, "I am thankful that we are living in the fighting days when there are so many things waiting to be done that we have no time to sit down and feel sorry for ourselves; when humanity is seething and boiling and stirring with a thousand conflicting interests which in the end will work themselves out to the final good of the race."[53] A less familiar passage from a few years earlier conveys the same sense of opportunity and reward; in "L'Envoi" to *Janey Canuck in the West*, describing her feelings on moving to Edmonton in 1907, Emily Murphy wrote, "It is good to live in these first days when the foundations of things are being laid, to be able, now and then, to place a stone or carry the mortar to set it good and true." It was a modest enough ambition for a woman who would, before her career in public life was over, set in place one of the more important foundation stones of the modern women's movement, the legal recognition and constitutional entrenchment of women's personhood.

Notes

1 Deborah Gorham, "English Militancy and the Canadian Suffrage Movement," *Atlantis* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1975): 96, 106. See also Gorham, "The Canadian Suffragists," in Gwen Matheson, ed., *Women in the Canadian Mosaic* (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1976), 23-55; "Flora MacDonald Denison: Canadian Feminist," in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1979), 47-70; "Pen and Buckskin: Women Journalists in the West Who Knew Wheat & Justice," *Content* 85 (May 1978): 22-23.

2 Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 6.

3 Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950; reprinted 1974), 11, 55-56 (see also the long index entry under Press); Ramsay Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," in C. Berger and R. Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 187-208. Paul Rutherford, in *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), alludes briefly to the entry of women into journalism and the development of the family and women's page; he has little to say about the significance of these developments for the women's movement.

4 An account of the Club's founding, drawing on the reminiscences of several participants, is by Kathleen Mathers in the Golden Jubilee *Newspacket* (published by the CWPC in 1954), 6. See also Gertrude Balmer Watt's memories of the occasion, ibid., 2-3, and George Ham's version in *Reminiscences of a Raconteur* (Toronto: Musson, 1921), 152-55.

5 Indexes to writing by and about women in the Winnipeg *Tribune*, Manitoba *Free Press* and *Grain Growers' Guide* (selected periods to 1920) have been compiled by students of Mary Kinnear, Department of History, St. John's College, Winnipeg. An index to major Saskatchewan dailies has been published by the Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB] in Regina; the Public Archives of Alberta [PAA] has an index to Lethbridge newspapers and to the Edmonton *Bulletin* to 1900. Gloria Strathern of the Faculty of Library Science, University of Alberta, is currently at work on a directory of all Alberta newspapers.

6 Kate Simpson Hayes was the first of this group to publish a book; her collection of stories and verse, *Prairie Pot-pourri*, appeared in 1895, followed by *Aweena*, a tale, in 1906. Nellie McClung was the most prolific, publishing sixteen books in many genres: polemical essays (*In Times Like These*, 1915; reprinted 1972), collections of newspaper columns, novels, shorter fiction, and two volumes of autobiography (*Clearing in the West*, 1935; reprinted 1976, and *The Stream Runs Fast*, 1945; reprinted 1965). Francis Marion Beynon's *Aleta Dey*, a novel of ideas, was published in 1919 and will soon be reprinted. Late in life Cora Hind published *Seeing for Myself* (1935), a travel account with some autobiographical overtones. Hind's friend and colleague Kennethe Haig wrote a biography of Hind, *Brave Harvest* (1945). Katherine Hughes also wrote a biography, publishing *Father Lacombe: The Black-robe Voyageur* in 1911. Her Edmonton colleague Gertrude Balmer Watt published two short collections of newspaper columns, *A Woman in*

the West (1907) and *Town and Trail* (1908). In the persona of "Janey Canuck," Emily Murphy wrote a travel book and three books of personal essays culled from her magazine journalism; as Judge Murphy she published an exposé of the drug trade, *The Black Candle* (1922; reprinted 1973). Georgina Binnie-Clark published two semiautobiographical books on her years in the west, *A Summer on the Canadian Prairies* (1910) and *Wheat and Woman* (1914; reprinted 1979). A good modern biography of Ethel Johns, giving portions of her writings, is Margaret M. Street's *Watch-fires on the Mountains* (1975). Less rigorous but still useful are Barbara Villy Cormack's biography of Irene Parlby, *Perennials and Politics* (n.d.), and Byrne Hope Sanders's *Emily Murphy, Crusader ("Janey Canuck")* (1945). Much of Violet MacNaughton's extensive correspondence is on deposit at the Saskatchewan Archives Board in Saskatoon, as are papers of Effie Laurie Storer, daughter of pioneer Territorial newspaperman P.G. Laurie. Florence Randall Livesay's diary and some letters are held by the Public Archives of Manitoba; Livesay also wrote and translated verse and folktales. Papers of the Balmer Watt family are in the University of Alberta Archives. The PAA holds papers of several women journalists, as does the Glenbow-Alberta Institute in Calgary.

7 Branch papers in Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM). Two books of clippings on CWPC members and activities kept by Harriet Walker are in the CWPC Winnipeg branch papers in MG 10 A1, Box 4. Evelyn Murphy's scrapbook of clippings on her mother Emily's career is in the City of Edmonton Archives. Scrapbooks by Storer and Price are in the Media Club papers at the Public Archives of Canada [PAC], MG 28 1 232 (finding aid available).

8 Custodian of the Saskatoon branch papers as of July 1984 was Babs Hall of Saskatoon. I am grateful to her for permitting me to see these papers, which deal with the period after 1930, and for supplying a copy of the 1954 *Newspacket*, an invaluable historical source.

9 Robin Rowland, "Kit Watkins" [Kit Coleman], *Content* 85 (May 1978): 20. The information on Coleman's life comes from Rowland, ibid., 15; Ted Ferguson, *Kit Coleman, Queen of Hearts* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1978), a collection of Coleman's journalism with a brief biographical introduction; and Mabel Burkholder, "'Kit'" (n.p., n.d.: [1934]), a short "appreciation" published by the Hamilton branch of the CWPC.

10 Sketchy biographical information on Kate Simpson Hayes has been found in Bruce Peel's *Bibliography of the Prairie Provinces to 1953*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 689; H.J. Morgan's *Canadian Men and Women of the Time* (Toronto: Briggs, 1898, 1912); and the obituary in the Winnipeg *Tribune*, 16 January 1945. The account of her relations with N.F. Davin is based on B. Koester, *Mr. Davin, MP* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980). See also Ken Mitchell's 1979 play *Davin the Politician*, in which this relationship is effectively dramatised.

11 *Newspacket*, 1954, 7. George Ham in his *Reminiscences*, 152, describes Graham's manner as "cyclonic."

12 *Newspacket*, 1954, 7; PAM, MG 10 A1, CWPC, Winnipeg Branch, Cora Hind, "Historical Notes of the Canadian Women's Press Club"; PAM, MG 9 A99, Livesay Papers, Florence Randall Livesay Diary. Copies of *The Sunset Echo* are in PAM and PAA.

13 As women entering a male-dominated field they tried several self-designations (women of the press, women journalists, newswomen, sisters of the pen, among others), but presswomen is the term they used most often among themselves. "Lady journalists" was never popular with presswomen, although it was often applied to them by others, especially men trying to be gallant. After 1920 discussions over terminology seldom appear, journalism by then including substantial numbers of women and consequently having moved, on the face of it at least, beyond gender consciousness. However, see Eve Drobot, "Sexism in the Newsroom?," *Content* 85 (May 1978), and a recent book by Susan Crean, *Newsworthy: The Lives of Media Women* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1985).

14 PAM, CWPC, Hind, "Historical Notes," *Newspacket*, 1954, 7.

15 PAM, CWPC, *Canadian Century*, 3 December 1910, in the Walker clipping book; PAM, CWPC, Annual Reports.

16 PAM, CWPC, Minute Books.

17 PAM, MG 10 C3, Quill Club, Minute Book. The membership of the Quill Club included CWPC members Cora Hind, Lillian Beynon, Francis Beynon, Florence Lediard and Ethel Johns.

18 See John Gilpin, "Failed Metropolis: The City of Strathcona, 1891-1912," and Carl Betke, "The Original City of Edmonton: A Derivative Prairie Urban Community," in Alan F.J. Artibise, ed., *Town and City: Aspects of Western Canadian Urban Development* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1981), 259-88 and 309-45. On page 311 Betke gives population figures for the two cities that add up to 30,479; Artibise, on page 11, citing 1911 census figures, claims 31,064. The *Saturday News* reported on 13 July 1912 that a special civic census showed Edmonton's population to be 53,383 – evidence both of the city's rapid growth and of the tendency of prairie civic census takers to be very enthusiastic in their counting.

19 Bruce Peel, *Bibliography of the Prairie Provinces*, 695.

20 The Balmer Watt papers in the University of Alberta Archives include a memoir by Ted Watt of his journalistic parents, and a single issue of *The Mirror* from 1912.

21 PAM, CWPC, Hind, "Historical Notes, *Newspacket*, 1954, 2-3; obituary, Edmonton *Journal*, 16 June 1963.

22 See *Newspacket*, 1954, 20, and Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy, Crusader* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1945) 119-35; see also Evelyn Murphy's very comprehensive collection of news clippings about her mother in the City of Edmonton Archives.

23 *Newspacket*, 1954, 8; Miriam Green Ellis, *Pathfinders* (Canadian Women's Press Club, no place or date of publication given), 5-6.

24 PAC, CWPC scrapbook 1910-13 donated by Vancouver branch in Media Club papers; PAM, CWPC, *Canadian Home Journal*, April 1911 in Walker clipping book.

25 It was possible for journalists in rural areas and in towns and cities without CWPC branches to join the club as a Dominion member. It would appear that at various times Violet MacNaughton, Effie Laurie Storer, Georgina Binnie-Clark, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Nellie McClung availed themselves of this option. According to a news article in the Vancouver branch scrapbook in PAC, Binnie-Clark joined the CWPC in November 1911.

26 PAM, CWPC, Manitoba *Free Press*, 19 December 1908 in the Walker clipping book; PAC, CWPC, Vancouver branch scrapbook; PAA, CWPC, Edmonton Branch Minutes.
27 *Newspacket*, 1954, 28; PAM Walker clipping book.
28 *Newspacket*, 1954, 29.
29. Ibid., 12.
30. PAM, CWPC, Minute Book; PAM, CWPC, assorted articles in the Walker clipping book.
31 An item in the Walker clipping book describes an occasion on which Emily Murphy telegraphed from Fort William to say that she was en route to Winnipeg and would arrive in time for lunch; hasty telephone calls produced a branch "meeting" that was duly reported on the next day in the Winnipeg press.
32 *Newspacket*, 1954, 28; PAM, CWPC, Calgary *Herald*, 15 January 1912 in the Walker clipping book.
33 PAM, CWPC, Annual Reports.
34 PAM, CWPC, Manitoba *Free Press*, October 1910 in the Walker clipping book. In Francis Marion Beynon's *Aleta Dey* (1919), the fictional protagonist describes Aleta as a suffragette. "'Gist,' I corrected, gently but firmly," Aleta responds (p. 87). The distinction appears to rest on the association in the public mind of suffragettes with militancy and violence, which arose from the British experience. Suffragists, on the other hand, were peaceful, reasoned, and committed to change achieved by lawful means. Many Canadian suffrage advocates explicitly disassociated themselves from the tactics (but not the objectives) of the militant suffragettes. Nevertheless some, like Nellie McClung, conceded that the more intransigent British atmosphere made violence a necessary last resort.
35 PAM, CWPC, Fort William *Herald*, March 1911 in Walker clipping book. For information on Agnes Deans Cameron see Roberta J. Pazdro, "Agnes Deans Cameron: Against the Current," in Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess, eds., *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in B.C.* (Victoria: Camosun College, 1980), 101-23.
36 PAM holds papers of seventeen women's organisations formed in Winnipeg between 1883 and 1924, all but a handful coming into existence between 1905 and 1914. PAA has less complete holdings, but offers two very interesting volumes, also available in Glenbow, published by the Edmonton and Calgary CWPC branches respectively: *Club Women's Record, Edmonton* (1916) and *Alberta Club Woman's Blue Book* (1917).
37 The entry recording this meeting, "the first . . . of the winter," is undated. Although those present agreed to meet again on 13 November, the final entry in the Quill Club records, undated and in another hand, reads, "Died and was buried, Nov. 13/1909. Who killed Cock Robin?"
38 PAM MG 10 C58, University Women's Club of Winnipeg [UWCW] Minutes and Annual Reports; PAM MG C11 Women's Canadian Club of Winnipeg. Oborne, it will be recalled, was national CWPC president in 1908-09.
39 Nellie McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast*, (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945) 101, 16; PAM, Political Equality League [PEL], Minutes, 29 March 1912.
40 PAM, PEL, Minutes; PAM, CWPC, Minutes.
41 PAM, UWCW, Minutes.
42 McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast*, 101.
43 PAM, UWCW, Minutes.

44 At meetings of the Association for Canadian Studies in Toronto in June 1984 Randi Warne, a doctoral student in Religious Studies at the University of Toronto, commented on Nellie McClung's debts to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1898) and Olive Schreiner, citing passages from *In Times Like These* (Toronto: George J. McLeod, 1915) that were strikingly similar in phrasing to Gilman and Schreiner. For three such instances, compare McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast*, 14, 52, and 64-65 to Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (1911; reprint, New York: F.A. Stokes Co., 1972), 176, 204 and 82-92 respectively. McClung mentions Gilman in *In Times Like These* but not Schreiner. A thorough study of McClung's sources, as well as of the nature of her rhetoric, has yet to be done and would be very valuable.

45 PAM, UWCW, Minutes; PAM, CWPC, Minutes.

46 Byrne Hope Sanders, *Emily Murphy, Crusader*, 345.

47 PAM, UWCW, Minutes.

48 PAA, CWPC; Edmonton *Journal*, assorted articles, 1908-13; Evelyn Murphy scrapbook, City of Edmonton Archives; PAM, CWPC, Walker clipping book.

49 Edmonton *Journal*, 26 October 1911, p. 6; 27 October 1911, p. 16; 26 September 1911, p. 6.

50 PAA, Women's Canadian Club of Edmonton [WCCE], Annual Report, 1912.

51 PAA, WCCE, ibid. The approximate figure for Edmonton's female population in 1912 is extrapolated from Betke, "The Original City of Edmonton," 310-11.

52 PAA, WCCE, ibid.

53 *Grain Growers' Guide*, 1 January 1913, p. 10, cited in Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon," 192. Beynon's remark has provided the title for an excellent play by Wendy Lill, *The Fighting Days*, produced in Winnipeg in 1984 and 1985 by the Prairie Theatre Exchange. A touring production played in several Manitoba centres, then in Toronto and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. The play dramatises the relations of Beynon and Nellie McClung during World War I and is set for the most part in the newspaper offices of the *Guide*, and the clubroom of the CWPC.

Women and Labour during World War I: Women Workers and the Minimum Wage in Manitoba

Linda Kealey

By the early 1920s seven out of nine Canadian provinces had passed minimum wage legislation primarily aimed at women workers and purporting to provide a "living wage." This legislative activity occurred during the war period and in its immediate aftermath. Beginning with Alberta in 1917, followed by Manitoba and British Columbia in 1918, Quebec and Saskatchewan in 1919, and Ontario and Nova Scotia in 1920, only the provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island had failed to follow suit. An active system of minimum wage regulation also existed in all the western provinces and Ontario, while only Nova Scotia and Quebec were slow to set up a mechanism to enforce the new legislation. Following on the examples set in New Zealand, Australia and some of the American states, the Canadian provinces enacted such legislation and set up enforcement mechanisms during a period of intense labour and reform activity. Campaigns to organise women workers, labour unrest, investigative commissions into the conditions of women's work and wages, and some sentiment among employers favouring schemes for industrial peace helped to prepare the ground for minimum wage provisions.[1]

With few exceptions historians have failed to explore the minimum wage question in Canada. No comprehensive study exists and therefore this article will examine the campaign for minimum wage legislation by focussing on Manitoba's experience during the war years. The article argues that the minimum wage campaign in Manitoba received its impetus from the labour movement, the Women's Labour League, and from a number of important investigative commissions' reports. The war years also witnessed a number of strikes involving women workers, and these strikes helped to bring attention to inadequate wages and working conditions faced by women workers in retail, service and manufacturing occupations. Heightened awareness, increased union activity among women, labour discontent and criticism mounted by reform and labour organisations put pressure on the

provincial government to act. Employer pressure, however, effectively determined the shape of the mechanism which administered the Minimum Wage Act of 1918. The result was criticism from both labour and management, but particularly from labour and socialist women who continued to press for a more effective application of the legislation. Rather than continue with a Minimum Wage Board, critics insisted that a flat minimum wage rate would be more effective and fair to women workers.[2]

While the Women's Labour League and the trade union movement proffered strong support for the minimum wage during the war and while some employers maintained their objections to the concept, the state, in the form of the provincial government, clearly accepted the minimum wage in a period of labour turmoil. This acceptance was premised on the perception that minimum wage legislation would meet some of the demands of labour and at the same time would help to defuse labour tensions at a critical juncture. State acceptance of the minimum wage transformed economic demands originating in economic relations onto the level of political class relations, and in the process the conflict between capital and labour was moulded into a form "compatible with the existing social relations of domination." Critical to the timing of the passage of this legislation was the increasing political mobilisation of labour in wartime and the state's perception of the advantages that would accrue to capitalists' abilities to control labour without necessarily increasing the level of political awareness and organisation among labour. Also important, but less critical, was the nature of the demands made by capitalists on the state and the "immediate political constraints perceived by state officials." In the former case the employers demanded a particular form of minimum wage machinery which promised to promote cooperation between capital and labour and which insisted on an industry by industry approach, thus promoting a maximum amount of manoeuverability for employers in decision-making. In immediate political terms, the Liberals, who succeeded the disgraced Conservatives in Manitoba in 1915, derived political mileage from its association with the reform movement and some elements of the labour movement. Continued pressure from these movements and the awareness of the Liberal party of the political advantages to be gained, assisted in the passage of a number of pieces of reform legislation from 1916 on. The minimum wage legislation fit into this pattern and followed upon legislation to amend a number of pieces of labour legislation.[3]

Swept up in the events and debates of the period, hardly a voice was heard questioning the necessity for a minimum wage for

women, except for the opposition of some employers. Even those in the socialist movement did not effectively question the need for such a provision, nor did critics examine the fundamental premise upon which the minimum wage was based — that the wage rate should reflect a "living wage" upon which a single woman could live. In many cases, critics did not even object to differential rates based on age or apprenticeship, thus allowing young and inexperienced women under eighteen to be paid less than a "living wage." The clear assumption was that all women under eighteen lived at home and therefore did not need the same minimums as women over eighteen. While a minimum wage for women was accepted (sometimes reluctantly by trade unionists) very little discussion occurred on this issue for men, and when it was discussed the minimum was based on the assumption of a family dependent on the male wage earner. By and large, the trade union movement came to accept the need for a minimum wage for women while insisting that unionization should be the primary route for the improvement of men's wages and conditions. Certainly the trade union movement also argued for the unionization of women, but it primarily seemed to accept the minimum wage as a necessary alternative for the vast majority of unorganised women. Minimum wage legislation promised to stem the flow of cheap female labour which threatened organised labour. Acceptance of the minimum wage concept, however, further buttressed the sexual division of labour, the idea of the family wage (for men), and the need for "protective" measures for women workers.[4]

Protective legislation generally, and minimum wage legislation in particular, were premised on sexual differences. The earliest Canadian factory acts restricted hours of labour for women and children or prohibited work in certain occupations or night work. Limited to "factories" of a certain size and largely unenforced because few inspectors were employed, these early acts passed in the 1880s and after provided only minimal protection. The minimum wage laws of the war period were also designed to protect a special category of worker and were supported by arguments that women faced worse conditions than men and that women were more difficult to unionize. Arguments for the minimum wage also stressed the biological and social differences between men and women workers. Women's work, at least in theory, was less arduous because of women's physical frailties and thus commanded a lower wage; in addition women were responsible for childbearing and rearing and their physical health should be protected as future mothers. Underlying these arguments were certain assump-

tions: the conditions justifying special laws for women were viewed as permanent; women's reproductive functions implied primary commitment to children and home; women's interests were almost always subordinate to family and society. Thus increased state intervention in the form of protective legislation became the dominant trend by the war period for this special category of worker based on the recognition of sexual differences and social goals such as the protection of future generations. These same concerns for health and exploitation were not applied to men. While some trade unionists suggested minimum wages for both men and women, the majority accepted that women had a special need for minimum wage protection.[5]

Minimum wage laws in Canada undoubtedly assisted some poorly paid women workers and twentieth-century governments by and large in the western world have implemented minimum wage laws for all workers as a matter of policy. Before the 1930s in Canada, however, these laws applied only to women and juvenile workers. Based on the British concept of the "social minimum" which stems from early factory acts and investigations of poverty and working conditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the minimum wage policy emerged in Canada with similar fundamental premises relating to gender. The "social minimum" for women presumed a transitory single woman worker whose ultimate destiny was marriage and child rearing.[6]

Social minimums for male wage earners existed in Canada as well, but under a different guise. Fair wage legislation had been passed at the federal level in 1900 in the wake of debates and revelations of sweated labour in the production of uniforms for the post office. Manitoba passed a Fair Wage Act in 1916 which provided for a tripartite board to set rates and hours for construction trades workers employed on government public works projects. This type of legislation aimed at setting rates which reflected the prevailing wage rates normally used in industry and at preventing the use of sweated (underpaid) labour for government-related projects. Ironically, the original abuse it purported to correct, sweated female labour, faded into the background as fair wage legislation became identified with male construction work. Unlike minimum wage legislation, this sort of state intervention was accepted as normal procedure and the potential parallel with minimum wage legislation ignored.[7]

Manitoba's Minimum Wage Board (MWB) differed from other western boards. While both Alberta and British Columbia made provisions for boards, their boards were more limited in power and also more directly tied to cabinet ministers; in British

Columbia the board was chaired by the deputy minister of labour and operated at the pleasure of the lieutenant governor-in-council. The British Columbia legislation did not require employer or employee representation on the board and the two-tiered structure of advisory conferences which made recommendations to the board further complicated the board's operation. In Manitoba the five-member board represented labour and management with a neutral chair. Consultation with representatives of the employers and employees in each industry was built into the process of arriving at a minimum wage figure. Structurally the Manitoba MWB was an improvement over other models and it worked rapidly in the first years of its existence to examine wages and conditions as well as hours in forty-four different decisions prior to 1921. In addition, two of the five board members had to be female — one representing labour and the other management. It should be noted, however, that minimum wage provisions applied only to cities specified in the legislation, thus providing no protection for women workers in rural areas.[8]

Before examining the MWB in detail it is necessary to comment briefly on the nature of women's work, particularly in Winnipeg where the vast majority of women affected by the minimum wage lived. Particularly noteworthy is the increasing importance of sales and clerical work and the changing nature of service work by the war's end. This type of expanding women's work will be examined (in Section 1) in the light of attempts to organise the previously unorganised in the female labour force and in the context of public revelations concerning women's wages and hours of work, all of which helped to increase the pressure for the MWB. The campaign for the minimum wage and the decisions made by the board will be discussed in Sections 2 and 3.

1

The salient features of Winnipeg's female labour force can be gleaned from the census of 1921 which reported a population of 139,712 persons (ten years old and over) of whom 53 percent engaged in paid labour. Women represented 23.4 percent of the labour force while men constituted 76.6 percent. One out of every four women (ten years old and over) engaged in paid labour. Undoubtedly most of them were single, although direct evidence on this is lacking. The age data provided by the census suggest that this is the case. When we compare the number of women who worked with the pool of women in that age group, it is evident that the peak working age for women was between seventeen and twenty-four years of age. After the age of twenty-four, the percent-

Clerks in main office, Great West Life Assurance Company, Winnipeg, c. 1919. Collection: Great West Life Assurance/Public Archives of Canada, 143058.

age of women working compared to the available pool is reduced by one-half. As women married they dropped out of the labour force either by choice, social expectation or by regulation.[9]

The most important areas of women's work by 1921 were located in the service, clerical and retail sectors of the economy; the three sectors combined accounted for 70 percent of female employment in Winnipeg. Manufacturing constituted slightly more than 10 percent of women's work. Wartime conditions accelerated the trend toward increased employment in clerical and sales areas while domestic and personal service work remained important, although more likely to be performed in extra-household circumstances, for example, in hotels, restaurants and laundries. Rising costs of living, more public discussion of women's wages and working conditions, and attempts to organise these previously unorganised areas characterised the war period and contributed to the pressure for a minimum wage. Briefly considered here will be the manufacturing, service, sales and clerical sectors where Winnipeg women worked during the war and its immediate aftermath.[10]

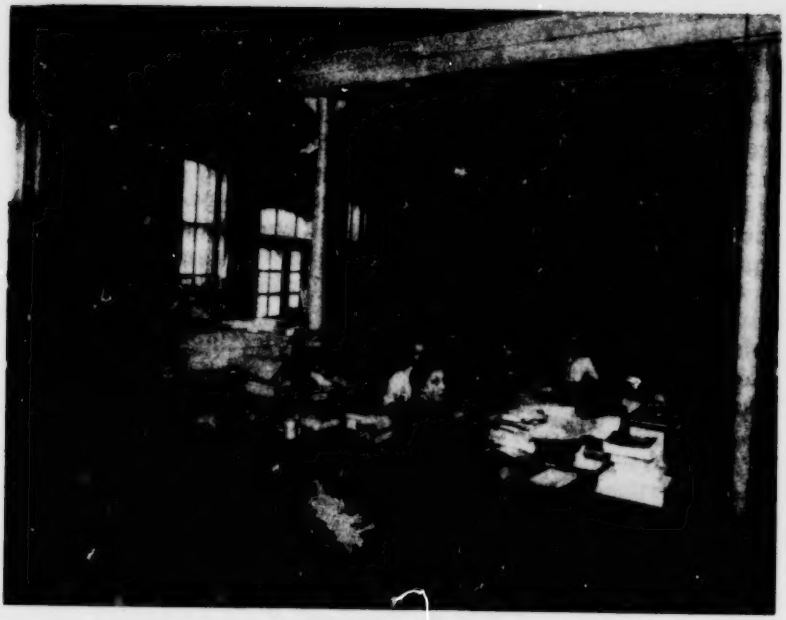
The manufacturing sector, while statistically less important in 1921, was the object of much of the MWB's early attention in 1918-19. Some of the worst conditions for women appeared in the factories under its jurisdiction and consequently the MWB first turned its attention to this area where just over 10 percent of the female labour force worked; textiles and garments accounted for

Workers in printing office of T.W. Taylor Co., Winnipeg, c. 1915. Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

58 percent of all women's work in the manufacturing sector in 1921. The food manufacturing area employed a further 16 percent of the women in manufacturing; most of these women worked in the biscuit and confectionery trade. Nearly 15 percent of the women in the manufacturing sector worked in wood- and paper-related occupations, most of them in printing and bookbinding; a smaller number manufactured bags and paper boxes.[11]

The 1918 survey of the Minimum Wage Commission in Manitoba provides some statistics on the numbers of women engaged in these same areas. In most cases the 1918 report records larger numbers of women working in manufacturing than the 1921 census, probably because of more demand in wartime. The differences are quite large in some categories, however; while the 1918 report lists 333 women working in paper box and bag factories, the 1921 statistics report merely 46 women workers; similarly the 1918 figures show 313 women in the confectionery trade compared to 210 in 1921. The figures for garment workers, by contrast, show little change.[12]

Minimum Wage Board decisions affected the entire manufac-



Interior of T.W. Taylor Co., Winnipeg, c. 1915. Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

turing sector as we shall see below. The MWB investigated hours, wages and conditions for each trade and recommended fixed hours and standard wages for both adults and juveniles.

Service work remained an important source of women's employment in the twentieth century; domestic service in individual households remained important and this area of women's work is discussed in another essay in this volume.[13] The discussion here highlights another form of service worker — waitresses — whose low wages and poor working conditions concerned the labour movement and the MWB during and after the war. Culinary workers in Winnipeg worked long hours and depended on gratuities to provide sufficient wages. This group's attempt to reorganise a union at the war's start demonstrates the difficulties of organising service workers even in the more buoyant conditions of wartime labour shortages. An estimated one thousand men and women worked in the restaurants and cafés of Winnipeg in 1914 where the "greater percentage of the craft" consisted of women. Despite this the *Voice* reported in April that only thirty-five of the 250 enrolled members of the revitalized Cooks, Waiters

and Waitresses' Union were women. Waitresses' wages averaged fifteen to twenty-five dollars per month and they worked long hours every day of the week, including Sundays.[14]

The union struggled to maintain its membership during the war and attempted to secure ten-hour days in place of twelve, and a six-day week instead of seven. In 1915 the union pledged itself to fight for a wage equal to three-quarters of the male wage for women doing the same work, but little benefit came of the disputes and strikes in which the union engaged and during 1916-17 the organisation crumbled. At the end of 1918 renewed activity emerged, perhaps encouraged by the formation of a Hotel and Household Workers' Union backed by the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council and led by women. Public meetings advertised in January 1919 urged women to join the Cooks, Waiters and Waitresses' Union (Local 592): "Waitresses too Come on girls — wouldn't you like to be organised like the telephone girls." Organisation of waitresses, however, remained elusive and the union was "badly shattered" in the aftermath of the Winnipeg General Strike, according to the union's international organiser. Despite the fact that waitresses were brought under the MWB which specified a $12.50 minimum and a forty-eight-hour week with one day off, evasion by restaurant owners remained a stumbling block.[15]

By 1921 the census reported 464 waitresses and 260 waiters in Winnipeg, a figure considerably below the wartime estimates. Unlike the waitresses and other service workers, domestic servants did not benefit from MWB decisions because these household workers were specifically excluded from its jurisdiction.[16]

Clerical work became an increasingly important area of women's work during the labour shortage of the war years. As one labour commentator noted:

> A great number of office employees have been withdrawn to the battlefields and the skirt has replaced the pant. In proportion to the demand wages rose. The hours being generally favorable and the pay satisfactory, the typists and other office clerks gave no thought to the possible changes to come, and were content with their position in the economic field.

By the early 1920s office workers and clerks in finance and government accounted for about one-third of the female labour force in Winnipeg, thus assuming more importance than service work. As Graham Lowe has already pointed out, the key decade for the "feminization" of the office in Canada was 1911-21 and Winnipeg was no exception.[17]

By the end of the war office workers in Winnipeg began to organise. These "prodigal children of the Labor Family" had "scent[ed] trouble" with the war's end and mobilised in early 1919. Clerical workers in the large establishments worked longer hours (forty-six to forty-eight per week) than their counterparts in smaller offices, according to the *Western Labor News*. In addition, large offices in places like the Canadian National Railways paid women office workers less than they paid the men. Unsatisfactory working conditions were also reported as contributing to the general discontent. By March 1919 a union had been formed and affiliated to the Trades and Labor Council of Winnipeg. While the details of the organisation are not entirely clear, government stenographers were a substantial group in the new union. Their unionization occurred immediately before the MWB decided to include them under its provisions, thus underlining the contradiction between the minimum wage strategy and unionization. This contradiction fueled mounting criticism of the MWB.[18]

The trade sector also employed a sizeable proportion of the female labour force in Winnipeg during the war and immediately following it. Public commentary and criticism of wages, hours and conditions for women salesclerks prompted the University Women's Club to launch its own investigation in 1914. In addition, the 1918 Minimum Wage Commission examined twenty-one stores and obtained information on the number of employees and their wages.

The Work of Women and Girls in the Department Stores of Winnipeg (1914) examined four department stores including the Hudson's Bay Company and the T. Eaton Company. The largest store (unnamed in the report) employed 1900 women in February 1914; two others employed 190 and 322 women respectively. The fourth was a small firm with 20 women employees. The report noted that hours were generally from 8:20 A.M. to 5:30 or 6:00 P.M. and that Saturday half-holidays were given in the summer. Most women employees were eighteen years old or older. With regard to wages the report claimed that "saleswomen of average efficiency in Winnipeg are earning at least nine dollars a week." Wage data cited in the study are problematic, however, since only one store allowed the committee to examine its wage records. For women under eighteen wages were lower, usually starting at five dollars per week; the report justified wages of five to eight dollars per week as appropriate for learners. The report noted occupational health hazards such as constant standing, lack of ventilation, and nervous strain, but chose to focus its recommendations on areas outside of working conditions and the labour process. Notably the

report stressed the need for low-cost housing for working women and the need for more vocational education.[19]

The 1918 report of the Minimum Wage Commission revealed that 47 percent of the 1,363 saleswomen it surveyed made ten dollars per week or less at a time when the cost of living had increased substantially. The Commission's figures were incomplete, however, since stores were not compelled to give information and thus the poor wages and conditions of women salesclerks undoubtedly were underestimated.[20]

Salesclerks demonstrated their discontent during the war by mounting an organisational drive to unionize clerks in 1917. An organisation of Retail Clerks appeared in Winnipeg in the early twentieth century but this organisation, while reportedly militant, was short-lived and sporadic. As in Great Britain, the war helped to catalyze organisational drives among clerks and in the spring of 1917, 350 Winnipeg salesclerks met in the Labor Temple under the auspices of the Trades and Labor Council. The low wages paid to women and girls were noted by the speakers. Despite the rosy conclusions of the 1914 report on department stores, women employed in five-and-ten-cent stores like the F.W. Woolworth Company earned as little as six dollars per week. With the assistance of the Women's Labour League (WLL) of Winnipeg, led by socialist Helen Armstrong, the F.W. Woolworth Company employees demanded an eight-dollar minimum and a half-day holiday; to back up their demands they went on strike on 26 May. The F.W. Woolworth Company offered to pay eight dollars but refused to recognise the union.[21]

The WLL played a key role in this strike, as did the general labour movement of Winnipeg. Both helped to garner community support for the striking women and the labour movement raised strike funds directly since the fledgling union had few resources. The strikers shortly faced an injunction against picketing and a twenty-five-thousand-dollar civil damages suit. The judge who granted the injunction noted that while he granted the injunction, the civil suit would do the store little good in the public's eyes. Despite public sympathy with the F.W. Woolworth Company strikers, the injunction effectively broke the strike and allowed the hiring of scabs. The labour movement was outraged and demanded the immediate reinstatement of the striking workers; at a public meeting, the participants resolved that "we pledge ourselves to do everything in our power to secure a living wage for the women wage workers in this province. . . ." The strike was thus resolved by injunction and most of the striking women lost their jobs; the union failed to get recognition and an eight-dollar

minimum was promised by the store, after the strike ended on 11 June.[22]

Most importantly this strike and a coincident strike by telephone operators drove home the message that most women workers were inadequately remunerated for their labour. While the F.W. Woolworth Company strike was small, the telephone operators numbered approximately six hundred and were united in their purpose. In February 1917 the "Hello Girls" of Winnipeg had organised a union and applied to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers for a charter. Half or more of the operators signed up almost immediately and by March, reports circulated of an espionage system within the union. In April the Manitoba Telephone Commission received a wage demand from the union requesting increases of from 15 to 40 percent; the Commission in turn asked for a 10 percent rate increase from the Public Utilities Commission. By then almost 100 percent of the workers were union members, and sentiment for a strike was growing if the demands were refused. A three-hour strike by the operators on 1 May prompted an investigation and the telephone workers agreed to remain on the job until the end of May when the investigatory board promised to report its findings. In the meantime the operators went back to work with an advance in wages and no commitment to accept the findings of the board while the government-run Telephone Commission promised to abide by the board's findings. "They possessed the power and they used it," commented the *Voice*. Thirty-five dollars per month was inadequate in the face of the rising cost of living during the war and the operators demanded forty dollars minimum and better hours and conditions. Women operators testified to the insufficiency of their wages before the board, which was headed by Ed McGrath, Secretary of the Manitoba Bureau of Labor and chair of the Minimum Wage Commission. Perhaps more influential, however, was the testimony of two large employers of women workers in banking and insurance; these men testified that they paid their women employees a minimum of forty-five to fifty dollars per month. On the last day of May, the chair of the board delivered his report to the Attorney General and met the operators in the Labor Temple to explain the terms of the settlement: forty dollars per month minimum; a $2.50 increase every six months up to a maximum of sixty dollars; hours were reduced to eight per day, and 203 hours constituted a month's work for the purpose of computing overtime pay.[23]

The settlement was regarded as a victory by most workers. The success resulted not only from public sympathy with the women

but from the tactics adopted. The solidarity of operators throughout the province, the timing of an electrical workers strike the day after the three-hour strike by the operators, and other industrial disputes helped to put pressure on the government in wartime.

2

These two labour disputes in 1917, involving women workers, helped to focus attention on the question of the minimum wage for women. Simultaneously, the Minimum Wage Commission was getting down to work on a broad investigation of the wages, hours and conditions of women workers, thus increasing the pressure for a minimum wage. Discussion of the minimum wage preceded World War I, but in Manitoba, as elsewhere in Canada, the war and labour disputes strengthened the demand for legislation. The province's first female factory inspector, Ida Bauslaugh, lectured to the University Women's Club on the need for a minimum wage in June 1916. At the end of that year, at a meeting between the executives of the Trades and Labor Council (TLC) and the Manitoba branch of the national Trades and Labor Congress, a resolution for a minimum wage bill for women was passed and subsequently sanctioned by the Winnipeg TLC. Its representatives met with the government to demand such legislation in early 1917; since it was too late in the legislative session to introduce such a measure, a Royal Commission was discussed as the "next best thing."[24]

The Commission was appointed in the spring of 1917, just before the telephone workers' dispute and the F.W. Woolworth Company strike. The investigation was entrusted to Ed McGrath and the Bureau of Labor. McGrath, a former TLC officer, hired Alice Blackburn as principal undercover investigator of the conditions and wages of women workers in Winnipeg. From her expense accounts it appears that Blackburn began her work in the summer of 1917 when she undertook employment in various companies. While paid a salary by the Bureau of Labor, she worked for short periods at knitting goods factories, laundries, confectionery manufacturers, and garment factories. The Commission also interviewed women workers and completed an interview schedule with over two hundred women; in the interview the women were identified by age and nationality. Their type of work, wages, hours, whether they lived at home, worked overtime, or received vacation pay, their length of work life, and the age they left school were all recorded. In addition, they were asked to estimate their

cost of living expenses. Unfortunately the report included only seven samples of these interview schedules; the others have not survived. The Commission also sought the opinions of two dozen prominent women from the labour movement, women's organisations, employers, social agencies, and the professions. The main body of the report consisted of statistical tables, industry by industry, with wage rates and number of employees specified. The companies were identified only by number.[25]

While the survey covered 9,354 women in 328 establishments, the tabled report gave information on 2,960 women in 145 manufacturing establishments. The report was tabled with the understanding that much of it would remain confidential, perhaps because of the damaging nature of some of the evidence.[26]

The evidence of the table report showed that most of the women were over eighteen (75 percent). A substantial number of surveyed employees worked in retail stores (1,363); this figure is in addition to the factory employees. Of the 2,960 factory employees, the largest number worked in garments (908), followed by laundry workers (369), confectionery factories (313) and foodstuffs (289). Despite the testimony of several prominent women that five hundred dollars per year was the minimum that a working woman could live on, the evidence showed that many women fell far below this. The partial survey of salesclerks showed that 53 percent of them earned more than ten dollars per week; retail stores, however, were not compelled to answer the survey and the results are partial. In the garment industry nearly half earned less than ten dollars per week, some as little as three dollars to five dollars per week. The thirteen laundries surveyed employed 369 women but only 41 women (11 percent) received ten dollars or more. In fifteen confectionery factories employing 313 women (almost half under eighteen) only 48 (15 percent) earned ten dollars or more per week.[27]

The sample questionnaires highlighted a few of the worst cases — a sixteen-year-old employed in a candy factory for five dollars per week; a twenty-two-year-old, self-supporting Jewish woman who worked for eight dollars per week and who expected "to be able to buy woollen underwear this winter for the first time"; a twenty-year-old Polish woman who worked in a bedding factory for $5.35 per week — as a result she owed two months' board and a doctor's bill.[28]

The undercover investigator also reported on her experiences working in various factories; for the six positions mentioned she earned between five dollars and seven dollars per week. While the stated hours were fifty per week, in one case she worked sixty-

three hours and in another, fifty-three hours. By matching some of the expense accounts with her statements it is possible to determine that the investigator earned seven dollars per week in a laundry, and six dollars to seven dollars per week in three confectionery factories, thus supporting the general evidence of very low wages even for mature women over eighteen.[29]

The Commission's Report was tabled in the Legislature on 7 February 1918. Even before this official act, consultations were in progress between representatives of the TLC, the manufacturers' association and the Bureau of Labor. Meeting in early January, the confidential proceedings aimed at reaching an agreed-upon minimum wage figure. The *Voice* reported that a ten-dollar minimum wage would be suggested but noted that the manufacturers were expected to oppose

> not the amount of the minimum, but that it is impossible to put it into effect in this province first and that the matter should be taken in hand by the Dominion Government. . . .[30]

The WLL met with Ed McGrath on 15 January and urged all women to be present; on 18 January the TLC debated the minimum wage question. While the TLC committee was complimented on its handling of the negotiations, one Council member took strong objection to the idea on the basis of the family wage; he was promptly answered by a woman delegate who pointed out that more and more women were entering the industrial labour force, especially during wartime. The TLC took the position that it would support provincial legislation while recommending trade union organisation to working women and campaigns for equal pay.[31]

As the negotiations continued between employers and labour over the minimum wage, public pressure was brought to bear on the question through the churches and the *People's Forum*. At the request of the WLL a dozen pastors from churches of different denominations gave sermons on the minimum wage question. In the legislature, labourite F.J. Dixon endorsed the ten-dollar minimum. Despite this pressure, no agreement was reached and a deputation of manufacturers approached the Minister of Public Works in late January to propose an alternative. Despite the fact that no bill had been introduced, hearings were held before the Law Amendments Committee in early February to discuss the alternative solution: a Minimum Wage Board. The labour representatives proposed a compromise measure when further discussions reached a stalemate. They proposed a ten dollar minimum for women seventeen and over, seven to nine dollars

for fourteen to sixteen year-olds, and a five-person board with equal representation from labour and employers to oversee the legislation. The manufacturers also rejected this compromise and in the end two separate bills appeared before the Law Amendments Committee which chose the Minimum Wage Board option. Curiously, the vote was taken in the Committee while most of the labour supporters were absent. When the question was re-opened, the labour supporters were voted down, ten to six. The final Law Amendments Committee resolution also recommended that two of the five board members be women. The chair of the investigation, Ed McGrath, held out some hope for the new legislation. There was, he said,

> no need to be downhearted about the outcome of the minimum wage agitation. If the act passed by the legislature is honestly and sympathetically administered, it will be of immense benefit to the working girls. The legislature has very plainly recognized the claim for a decent living wage for all grades of female labor. . . .[33]

The MWB was appointed in April 1918 with Dr. J.W. MacMillan, principal of Manitoba College, as chair. Labour was represented by Miss Lynn Flett, an activist in the WLL and the Political Equality League and sister of Winona Flett (who married F.J. Dixon), and by James Winning of the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council; the employers were represented by Mrs. Edna Nash and bakery owner Edward Parnell.[33]

Despite the appointment of Flett to the MWB, some members of the WLL remained dissatisfied with the MWB and its actions. In the fall of 1918 and the spring of 1919, rumblings of discontent became loud protests that the MWB was unreasonable in its awards. Helen Armstrong, outspoken president of the WLL, was particularly vociferous in her criticisms. As a supporter of the flat minimum wage rate, she objected to the MWB as a weak measure and pointed out the difficulties of women trying to live even on $9.50 or $10.00 per week. The minimum, she argued, too often became the maximum wage rate. Some of her colleagues in the labour movement did not agree and wanted to give the MWB a "longer trial." They claimed that Armstrong misunderstood the purpose of the MWB and her objections were dismissed as a tempest in a teapot.[34]

Undeterred by the criticisms, Armstrong continued to voice her objections to the MWB, particularly when the newly organized government clerks protested their inclusion under MWB provisions in March 1919. This dispute fuelled further discussions in the press and at the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council meetings

in February and March. Eventually Armstrong was vindicated when the TLC voted to support the women's request that a flat twelve-dollar rate, irrespective of age, replace the board. This decision was forwarded to the Premier. Despite the vote in favour of the flat rate, dissension continued between the WLL and the TLC over the MWB. The crisis over the government stenographers pinpointed the contradiction between a minimum wage strategy and unionization. Caught in the tangle of contradictions, the WLL and the TLC found themselves at odds.[35]

3

How did the MWB work and what were its decisions? In reflecting on the MWB, its first chair, Dr. J.W. MacMillan, noted that the MWB operated in a unique fashion; rather than use the dual structure of trade boards and an MWB, the Manitoba MWB called all parties together to work out the regulations. MacMillan pointed out that this method was speedier and gave the MWB the balance of power in the meetings. Harmonious decision making was fostered by face-to-face meetings and MacMillan commented that in only two of thirty-five meetings held in the first fifteen months of the MWB's operations was he forced to cast a deciding ballot.[36]

In its first investigation the MWB tackled the laundry industry. Three representatives of the women laundry workers met with three representatives of employers and the MWB. A cost of living schedule was drawn up by the MWB and approved by the parties. The minimum wage of $9.50 per week was based on the estimate that a woman could live decently on just under five hundred dollars per annum. Inexperienced workers over eighteen and probationers under eighteen, however, received less. In the latter case they might earn as little as seven dollars to start and clearly the MWB assumed that these women lived at home. The *Labour Gazette* noted that the MWB granted these concessions "because of the huge increase in the cost of doing business, also the competition of the Chinese laundries. . . ." The MWB also stipulated weekly pay, shorter hours, improvements in physical working conditions and one week's notice of termination of employment.[37]

The same pattern was followed in subsequent MWB decisions in 1918 which covered the food industry, retail stores, paper box and soap factories. Different minimums were established for learners and minors and, except for retail stores where the adult minimum was $12.00 per week, $9.50 to $10.00 remained the usual award. Fourteen factory-based industries were dealt with at the end of 1918; while the minimums awarded to adults

matched the twelve-dollar minimum paid in retail stores, the probationary periods were considerably lengthened, usually to eighteen months in contrast to the MWB's first decisions. This pattern of a twelve-dollar minimum and longer probationary periods continued in the MWB's decisions in 1919, which covered knitting factories, tailoring and millinery establishments as well as ladies' wear factories, garment factories, ladies' hat manufacturing, mail order establishments, printing, dyeing and dry-cleaning establishments, hairdressing salons, furrier and dressmaking establishments. In all of these decisions the MWB maintained differential wages for learners and minors, a twelve-dollar minimum for adults, hour limitations, regulations concerning light and ventilation and a provision that no more than 25 percent of the labour force could be classified as learners or minors.[38]

Perhaps the most noteworthy of the later decisions were the provisions in June 1919 for hotel and restaurant employees where a $12.50 minimum was established with no distinctions made by experience level; in hotels this scale applied to minors as well, and in restaurants no one under sixteen could be hired; in both hotels and restaurants night work was forbidden for those under eighteen. Cafe owners opposed the MWB decision, according to MWB member Lynn Flett, not so much because of the wage level but because of the shorter hours. The MWB permitted no more than a forty-eight-hour week and maximum of ten work hours daily. Previously waitresses worked as many as sixty-five to seventy hours a week. Meal breaks were specified and no work period could end between 12:30 and 7:00 A.M. One full day off must be granted to each female employee as well. Flett also noted that tips were of no concern to the MWB, which felt that a basic living wage took priority. In this case the MWB clearly took a more progressive stand than employers wished and rejected arguments which allowed for a lower minimum wage because of gratuities.[39]

In September 1919 the *Labour Gazette* reported on amending and supplementary orders as well as two new orders covering occupations thus far not included in MWB deliberations. Minimum wage rates were amended for workers in confectionery and biscuit, cigar, grocery, macaroni and vermicelli, pickle, paper box, and soap factories, as well as abattoirs and laundries. The old rates of $9.50 to $10.00 per week were raised to $11.00 and minors and learners were to receive a flat increase of one dollar per week. Part-time workers in shops, stores and factories in Winnipeg, St. Boniface, St. James and Brandon were to receive thirty cents per hour. A supplementary order provided that female employees in

shops and stores in these cities, other than office staff or those engaged in manufacturing, were to be covered by MWB regulations.[40]

The most controversial regulation, apart from that applying to the waitresses, was the order covering office workers. Office workers in Winnipeg, St. James and St. Boniface were limited to eight hours per day and a forty-four hour week with one half-day holiday each week. In stores and shops hours of labour for office workers, including overtime, were to be the same as for the selling force. The minimum wages for learners were set at $10.50 for the first three months, and $11.50 for the second three months, after which the rate for experienced adults was to reach $12.50 per week. Minors' wages varied according to age, ranging from $8.00 for fifteen year-olds to $10.50 for seventeen and one-half year-olds. In offices employing nine or more female workers, not more than 25 percent of the total staff (male and female) could be learners or minors. Employees with business training were to be exempt from the six-month learning period and casuals had to be paid the adult minimum rates.[41]

Enforcement of the MWB's decisions was another matter. Labour troubles in the spring of 1919 indicated that employers were not necessarily following the rulings of the MWB. Candy makers struck at Dingle-Stewart over the discharge of a female employee. The one-day strike was settled with the reinstatement of the employee but further trouble was expected because the women alleged that they were not receiving the minimum wage. Seventeen women employees at Blackwoods, a foodstuffs manufacturer, struck on 14 April for wage increases promised the previous September. In this case negotiation between union leaders and the company secured these women back pay up to the minimum wage level as well as an eight-hour day, a half-day holiday on Saturdays, and the promise of a lunch and dressing room, as specified in the Factory Act. Helen Armstrong reported that the men had "splendidly backed their efforts." Union tailors also threatened to strike to back up the attempt of women employees at the Manitoba Clothing Company to receive the twelve-dollar minimum for a fifty-hour work week. At an April meeting of the Winnipeg TLC complaints were made that employers were not paying the minimum wage at Hitchings Box factory, where women with eight years of experience received only eight dollars per week and young women of sixteen received only six dollars.[42]

4

Manitoba's experience with the MWB during World War I and

immediately following suggests the contradictions implicit in class and gender relations. Public concern with inequalities in the workplace for workers, and particularly women workers, and anxiety over labour unrest became focussed on the minimum wage as a solution. The minimum wage promised to provide a "living wage" for exploited women workers whose labour was perceived to compete with skilled labour; at the same time it promised to establish a mechanism whereby the state, with the cooperation of employers and employees, could intervene in the labour market to forestall disputes and correct inequities. While for certain women workers the MWB meant some improvement, the obstacles to enforcement remained large.

Concerning gender relations, the minimum wage appeared to provide a solution to the problem of competition between men and women in the labour market, and as a result the trade union movement supported this measure. Minimum wage provisions, based on the standard of a single woman worker's needs, left untouched the presumption that men should earn a family wage. That the trade union movement did not argue for a minimum wage for unskilled male labourers as well indicates the depths of the divisions between men and women workers and the acceptance of a gender-based division of labour. Furthermore this acceptance of the minimum wage also indicated the prevailing acceptance of women as a transitory and low-skilled reserve of labour, a view tacitly accepted by employers and the state.

Once the attempt to legislate a flat minimum wage failed, the labour movement was caught in a contradictory position and chose to support and participate in a mechanism which clearly favoured employers, since it allowed them to make the case for industry-by-industry decisions and to plead special circumstances. The concession of allowing lower rates for learners and minors also gave employers some flexibility while ignoring the needs of women who must support themselves. The dispute between the Winnipeg TLC and the WLL divided labour and highlighted the tensions between men and women in the working class.

In terms of class relations, the acceptance of the MWB meant the participation of working-class representatives in a mechanism designed to defuse class as well as gender conflict. The Manitoba MWB, although not entirely successful, by and large was able to defuse conflict up to the spring of 1919. In addition, at least temporarily, it divided the WLL from the labour movement.[43]

Notes

The author wishes to acknowledge the research assistance of Jessie Chisholm and to thank Michelle Pujol and Gregory S. Kealey for their comments.

1 Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," in M.S. Cross and G.S. Kealey, eds., *The Consolidation of Capitalism 1896-1919. Readings in Canadian Social History*, vol. 4 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 195-97; Kathleen Derry and Paul H. Douglas, "The Minimum Wage in Canada," *Journal of Political Economy* (April 1922): 155-86; Bryce M. Stewart, *Canadian Labor Laws and the Treaty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926), chapter 6.

2 For a brief general discussion of the minimum wage in Canada see Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day"; for Ontario see E.J. Campbell, "'The Balance Wheel of the Industrial System': Maximum Hours, Minimum Wage, and Workmen's Compensation Legislation in Ontario, 1900-39" (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1980).

3 The analysis here borrows and quotes from E.J. Campbell, "'The Balance Wheel of the Industrial System,'" especially pages 38, 77-86, 248-55, and 282-310. While the Ontario situation differed in some respects from Manitoba, many of the theoretical issues raised by Campbell about the role of the state are particularly relevant. For politics in Manitoba in this period see W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), chapters 14 and 15; Lionel G. Orlikow, "A Survey of the Reform Movement in Manitoba, 1910-1920" (Master of Arts thesis, University of Manitoba, 1955), chapter 4.

4 Dennis Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 73-74; Philip Snowden, *The Living Wage* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), 7-8, 16-17, 22-23. For the family wage see Hilary Land, "The Family Wage," *Feminist Review* (1980).

5 Judith A. Baer, *The Chains of Protection. The Judicial Response to Women's Labor Legislation* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), chapters 2 and 3; Department of Labour, *Official Report of the Proceedings of the National Industrial Conference* (Ottawa: 1919), 105 (remarks of Helena Gutteridge).

6 Guest, *Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 74; Linda Silver Dranoff, *Women in Canadian Law* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977), 73.

7 For a discussion of the origins of the federal legislation, see R.M. Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King. A Political Biography, 1874-1923* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 65-70; Manitoba's Fair Wage Act can be found in the Statutes of Manitoba, 1916, section 10, chapter 121; a list of wage rates, 1916-19, can be found in the files of the Minister of Public Works, RG 18, B 2, Box 9, file labelled "Fair Wage Board 1916-1920," at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM), Winnipeg.

8 Derry and Douglas, "The Minimum Wage in Canada," 156-74; Marie Campbell, "Sexism in British Columbia Trade Unions, 1900-1920," Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess, eds., *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in B.C.* (Victoria: Camosun College, 1981) 179-80; *Labour Gazette* 19 (December 1919): 1453-54.

9 The figures used here are from the 1921 Census; the 1911 Census used different categories for occupations of the labour force. The reader should note that census figures reflect the census definitions of "work" and also probably undercount the number of married women who brought income into their households. See Census of Canada, "Occupations," vol. 4, 1921, Table 2, 72-89.

Age data: Winnipeg, 1921

Age	Number Employed	Pool of Women in Age Bracket	Percentage of Pool Listed as Employed
10-13	9	6,822	.001
14	63	1,535	.04
15	268	1,420	18.90
16	603	1,557	38.70
17	888	1,578	56.30
18-19	2,244	3,288	68.20
20-24	4,732	8,652	54.70
25-34	4,845	17,725	27.30
35-49	2,895	17,794	16.30
50-64	749	7,126	10.50
65+	70	2,284	.03

Source: Census of Canada, "Occupations," vol. 4, 1921. Table 5, 610-11.

10 Women Workers in Winnipeg, 1921 (by sector)

Sector	Women workers (as percentage of all women workers)
Manufacturing	10.4
Transportation	3.2
Trade	14.8
Finance*	8.2
Service	23.2
Professions**	14.9
Government	2.3
Office	22.6
Other	.4
Total	100.0

*Most classified as clerks
**Nurses, teachers

11 Calculated from the Census of Canada, 1921, vol. 4, 72-89.

12 PAM, Manitoba, Sessional Papers, No. 27. "Return to an Order of the House Dated Thursday, February 7, 1918 on the Motion of the Honorable Member for Winnipeg Centre, Seat B." (Hereafter cited as PAM, Minimum Wage Commission Report, 1918.) For Alice Blackburn's accounts see PAM, Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Deputy Minister's Files, RG 18 B2, Box 5.

13 See Marilyn Barber's essay in this volume.

14 *Voice*, 9 January 1914, p. 9; 13 March 1914, p. 5; 3 April 1914, p. 8; 15 June 1917, p. 6.
15 Ibid., 23 April 1915, p. 8; 3 September 1915, p. 4 and p. 8; *Western Labor News* (hereafter *WLN*), 10 October 1919, p. 8; 17 October 1919, p. 8; 24 September 1920, p. 4.
16 Census of Canada, 1921, vol. 4, Table 3, 87.
17 *WLN*, 24 January 1919, p. 4; Graham Lowe, "Women, Work and the Office: The Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1901-31," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 5 (1980): 361-81.
18 *WLN*, 24 January 1919, p. 4; 7 March 1919, p. 1; 21 March 1919, p. 1; *Labour Gazette* (hereafter *LG*) 19 (September 1919): 1003-04.
19 University Women's Club of Winnipeg, *The Work of Women and Girls in the Department Stores of Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: no publisher given, 1914).
20 PAM, Minimum Wage Commission Report, 1918," n.p.
21 Barbara Drake, *Women in Trade Unions* (1920; reprint London: Virago, 1984), 88-90; Norbert C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), 52-55. For Winnipeg see *Voice*, 25 May 1917, p. 8; 4 May 1917, p. 8; 1 June 1917, p. 8.
22 *Voice*, 8 June 1917, p. 1, 4, 8; 22 June 1917, pp. 5, 8.
23 Ibid., 9 February 1917, p. 1; 16 February 1917, p. 4; 23 February 1917, p. 8; 16 March 1917, p. 1; 6 April 1917, p. 8; 13 April 1917, p. 1; 4 May 1917, pp. 4, 5; 1 June 1917, p. 8; 22 June 1917, p. 4. Testimony was also given by an operator and supported by Ed McGrath that women turned to prostitution because of low wages. The operator testified that she personally knew fifty women who had left the telephone company in the last nine years for "the profits of an immoral life." *Voice*, 18 May 1917, p. 8.
24 Ibid., 2 June 1916, p. 1; 8 December 1916, p. 6; 5 January 1917, p. 5; 19 January 1917, p. 4; 9 March 1917, p. 8.
25 Blackburn's expense accounts are located in PAM, Manitoba, Department of Public Works, Deputy Minister's Files, RG 18 B2, Box 5, 1917. See also PAM, Minimum Wage Commission Report, 1918.
26 The main findings of the Minimum Wage Commission are summarized in the *Voice*, 8 February 1918, p. 8.
27 Ibid.
28 PAM, Minimum Wage Commission Report, 1918.
29 Ibid.
30 *Voice*, 7 December 1917, p. 1; 4 January 1918, p. 8; 13 January 1918, p. 8.
31 Ibid., 13 January 1918, p. 8; 18 January 1918, pp. 5, 8.
32 Ibid., 25 January 1918, pp. 4, 8; 1 February 1918, pp. 1, 8; 8 February 1918, pp. 1, 4, 8; 15 February 1918, pp. 5, 8; 22 February 1918, p. 1; 1 March 1918, p. 8; 8 March 1918, pp. 1, 8.
33 The Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council and the WLL nominated members for the Minimum Wage Board. See *Voice*, 22 March 1918, p. 5; 12 April 1918, p.8.
34 *Tribune* (Winnipeg), 11 September 1918, p. 1; 13 September 1918, p.6; *WLN*, 7 February 1919, p.1.
35 *WLN*, 7 February 1919, p.1; 14 February 1919, p.1; 14 March 1919, p.1.
36 See *LG* 19 (December 1919): 1454.
37 *LG* 18 (July 1918): 537.
38 See the tabular summary, published in *LG* 20 (April 1920): 466-68.
39 *LG* 19 (July 1919): 846; *WLN*, 22 August 1919, p. 1.
40 *LG* 19 (September 1919): 1093-94.

41 Ibid.
42 *Tribune* (Winnipeg), 1 April 1919, p. 5; 15 April 1919, p. 1; 2 April 1919, p. 5; *WLN*, 18 April 1919, p.1; 4 April 1919, p.5.
43 E.J. Campbell, "The Balance Wheel of the Industrial System," 23.

The Servant Problem in Manitoba, 1896-1930

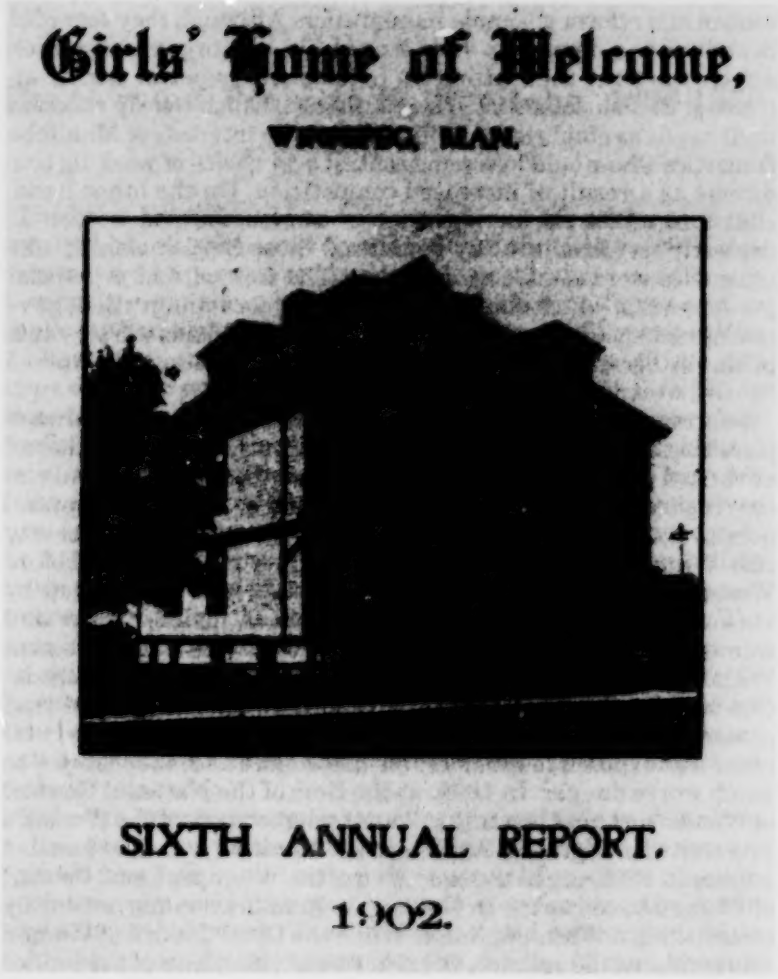
Marilyn Barber

The basic conditions of domestic service in Manitoba changed very little during the early decades of the twentieth century. Approximately 40 percent of Manitoba domestics held positions in Winnipeg while the other 60 percent worked on farms and in smaller urban centres in the province.[1] In spite of the expansion of alternative employment for women in factories, offices and shops, domestic service remained a common occupation for a young woman without professional qualifications who had to earn her own living or to contribute to the support of her family. Household work, which usually was readily available and which included living accommodation, enabled Manitoba women to migrate from rural areas to Winnipeg, and European women to emigrate across the Atlantic to western Canada. Immigrant women often had no choice of their initial occupation as immigration procedures and government policy channelled them into domestic service. The percentage of Manitoba domestic servants born outside the country was very high before World War I, and, as elsewhere in Canada, an even larger proportion of urban than rural domestics were immigrants. In 1911, 84 percent of domestics in Winnipeg were born outside Canada as compared with 62 percent elsewhere in the province.[2]

Although an active reform community developed in Winnipeg in the early twentieth century, interest in domestic service focussed more on maintaining the supply of workers through carefully supervised immigration than on reforming the conditions of household work. The demand for good domestic servants in Manitoba consistently exceeded the supply, in part because many young women worked as domestics for only a brief period of time before marriage. Men in Manitoba outnumbered women, although the disparity between the sexes, and hence the desperation of the bachelors, was not as great as in the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan. Manitoba housewives turned to the daughters of recent European immigrants for help in their homes, but also complained that as soon as they had trained the foreign domestic she left to be married, often in an arranged union with a man she had never met. Therefore Manitoba women's organisations, in concert with allied women's organisations across Canada,

sought to increase the supply of household workers by greater control and reform of female immigration. Although they regarded Scandinavian domestics very favourably, the organised women directed most of their attention to fostering Imperial ties by attracting British domestics. Their activities, which clearly reflected their needs as employers, conflicted with the interests of Manitoba domestics who would lose some control over choice of working conditions as a result of increased competition. On the other hand, efforts to assist the immigration of unaccompanied women as domestic servants initially benefitted those British women who otherwise were unable to emigrate. The federal and provincial governments, which shared responsibility for immigration, gave restrained encouragement to the recruiting of domestic servants primarily because of an interest in obtaining more suitable women for the west.

Efforts to promote supervised female immigration always stressed the provision of conducted parties, reception hostels and advanced passage fares. Leading proponents of female immigration regarded the establishment of a hostel as an essential prerequisite for the reception of unaccompanied women in a major city like Winnipeg. During the period of rapid immigration before World War I, a range of reception hostels was established by various religious and ethnic organisations for both men and women but such homes were considered essential for women. Without a hostel, it was most difficult to find suitable accommodation for large parties of women. In addition, reformers knew that a woman alone in a strange city without enough money for a hotel room was exposed to considerable discomfort and, they feared, to much worse danger. In 1896, at the time of the National Council of Women's annual meeting in Montreal, members of the Women's Protective Immigration Association of Montreal, who had founded a home in 1882, urged the executive of the Winnipeg Local Council of Women to cooperate in the female immigration movement by establishing a Winnipeg home. While the Local Council of Women contemplated the request, Octavia Fowler, daughter of the former Lord Mayor of London, offered to personally superintend a Winnipeg home for three years and to contribute five hundred dollars each year towards its maintenance.[3] A committee of prominent Winnipeg citizens accepted Fowler's offer and opened the Girls' Home of Welcome in 1897. An advisory board of prominent men, including the Reverend Charles Gordon, a clergyman, Principal McDermid, an academic, and J.H. Ashdown, a businessman, assisted the lady directors in soliciting grants from the federal and provincial governments.[4] Subsidised by government and by



Girls' Home of Welcome: Front Cover of Girls' Home of Welcome Annual Report, 1902. Collection: Provincial Library of Manitoba.

a gift from Lord Strathcona, a new house was built for the Girls' Home of Welcome in 1900 at the corner of Austin and Sutherland streets near the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) depot. The large frame house, lighted by electricity and heated by a hot air furnace, could accommodate forty women.[5]

The Girls' Home of Welcome provided temporary rest for tran-

sients travelling further west as well as for immigrants intending to remain in the province. A significant number of those listed in the annual reports as passing through the hostel did not remain in Manitoba. For women seeking work in Manitoba homes, the hostel prior to World War I also served as an employment bureau, receiving applications from Manitoba employers who wished help, and placing new arrivals. For those British domestics totally alone in a strange country and far removed from the support of family and friends, the hostel provided one source of assistance in time of need, a place to stay between situations or to seek aid when ill. The assistance, of course, was offered in the context of supervision and moral guidance. The Girls' Home of Welcome formed an important component in plans for bringing parties of domestics to Manitoba but whether the existence of the hostel induced more British women to emigrate is not known.

Advanced passage fares did increase the number of women able to come to Manitoba as domestic servants. Repeatedly, immigration agents in Britain reported that many women suitable for domestic service wished to emigrate but could not afford the fare. The Canadian government had abolished the passenger warrant system of assistance in 1888 and, in general, objected to encouraging immigrants who did not demonstrate their self-reliance by paying their own way. Nevertheless, because of the special needs of the North-West for female immigrants and because "one of the great drawbacks and difficulties in connection with settling the North-West has always been a great lack of servants," the Liberal government agreed to experiment in a limited revival of assistance for domestics.[6] In 1898, the immigration branch sent Mrs. Livingstone, the widow of a Presbyterian minister and a former employee of the Dominion Lands Office at Winnipeg, to recruit a carefully selected party of Scottish domestics for western farm homes.[7] The government paid Mrs. Livingstone a monthly salary of fifty dollars in addition to expenses and authorized her to advance passage fares to the domestics on the agreement that the money would be refunded to the government from Canadian wages. Mrs. Livingstone travelled extensively in Scotland, interviewing girls who responded to newspaper ads in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and highland areas such as Elgin, Inverness and the Orkney Islands. The result of her efforts was disheartening. Instead of the party of at least one hundred girls which she anticipated procuring, she returned to Canada with a much smaller group of sixty. In the Orkney Islands she met with no success, the girls there "being slow to move and want about six months to think the matter over before making their minds up to travel."[8]

PRETTY SCOTCH LASSIES READY TO COME TO WESTERN CANADA

Publisher of Free Press, Winnipeg, Canada.

Dear Sir,—A large number of unmarried young women of comely appearance, well educated and thoroughly trained in domestic and farm service have appealed to me as Provost of———to try to get them into domestic or other service in Canada, and I take the liberty of asking your kind assistance in the matter by inserting the enclosed advertisement in your widely read paper and I will be responsible for the cost of same. As I will guarantee the respectability of the young women I will thank you (if the matter should go through) to exercise due diligence that only respectable employers are put forward. I will be responsible that the women turn up at their destination as may be arranged. If the proposal goes on the people of the Northwest will be surprised to see what pretty, healthy-looking and fresh complexioned women the Highlands of Scotland can produce. Faithfully etc.,

A large number of respectable, strong, healthy young women from the Highlands and islands of Scotland of good appearance and with a thorough knowledge of domestic and farm service are wishful to proceed to the Northwest Provinces if their fares are advanced to them and which could be afterwards retained from their wages. Apply by letter to "Scotus," Free Press, Winnipeg, stating terms, wages and class of service offered, and where.

Western Canada has lots of room for any number of "unmarried young women of comely appearance, well educated and thoroughly trained in domestic and farm service" and the Free Press therefore gladly gives space, free of charge, to the above letter and the advertisement which accompanied it received from the Chief Magistrate of one of the cities in the Scottish Highlands. Miss Townsend, acting matron of the Girls' Home of Welcome, has kindly consented to pass on applications and all enquiries from those requiring girls should be directed to her.

SCOTCH GIRLS IN GREAT DEMAND

Letters Pouring in With Requests For Scotus, the Highland Provost.

The Scotch Provost who, through the agency of the Free Press offered to see to the sending out of some of Scotland's lassies for domestic service to Canada, will have his hands full, judging by the applications already sent in to Miss Townsend, of the Girl's Home of Welcome. The mail of two days brought thirteen letters, and a glance at their contents will show that some splendid openings are waiting for the right sort of girl. Referenced accompany the applications in most instances, and information is given as to the needs of those writing. One says: "My wife is tired of teaching foreign domestics, and was asking me only the other day if I could not get her a Scotch girl." Another tells of the need of a "cook general," and the writer, after giving information as to her home, says: "A Scotch girl will know what I mean by the words. You what I want."

One man hints at more. He sends a post card on which is a snapshot of himself, his three daughters, and his house. He is forty years old, and apparently more than well-to-do, for the snapshot shows that he is seated in an automobile that would have run away with a cost thousand or so, and the house is a large and most attractive mansion, one of brick, with a conservatory. The post card man says that marriage is a possibility. His little children are pretty, and it would not seem hard, one would think, to find a mother for them.

While the Girls' Home of Welcome is never beguiled into acting as a matrimonial agency, applications for help in the procuring of wives are occasionally received. Once, indeed, a letter was written in reply to one man saying that it was impossible to pay attention to the request of an unknown man. Whereupon, in a few days, he appeared, saying he quite saw the force and good sense of this, and decided to come in person. He went away discouraged when he found that the Girls' Home could not cater upon any such work, because of its responsibilities and complications.

All those writing in wish to know as to passage money. One, indeed, thought it ought not to cost more than twelve dollars! The regular fare with steerage breakfast and lunch provided is £7 to Canada, including a railway journey to Winnipeg, but the Scotch girls might come in a more direct way, which would be less. The wages offered range from $10 to $15 for the first six months or a year for other of $18. Miss Townsend has kindly consented to answer the applications, though it is to be feared it will entail on her a good deal of work.

News stories such as "Pretty Scotch Lassies Ready to Come to Western Canada," and "Scotch Girls in Great Demand," which appeared in the *Manitoba Free Press* on 23 March 1907 and 1 April 1907 respectively, indicated the great need for female domestic servants at the time.

A number of applicants accepted from other districts withdrew at the last minute, giving as the reason fear of the war between Spain and the United States. Although Mrs. Livingstone rejected factory girls and selected only those who had experience of domestic work, not many among those chosen knew farm life or the skills of milking and baking because she also rejected farm girls who worked occasionally in the field as undesirable.[9] As a result of the domestics' preference for city work and of the demand from socially prominent city employers and friends of Mrs. Livingstone for domestics, many of the party did not reach farm homes. Mrs. Livingstone left a few domestics with immigration

officials in the east and placed others in Winnipeg, Brandon and Portage La Prairie. Whether those who went to farms fulfilled the expectations of immigration officials and married within the year is not known. The failure of Mrs. Livingstone demonstrated the importance of the agent in the selection process as well as the need to recruit among those already interested in emigration. The government did not repeat its experiment, obviously considering that the expense and the problems outweighed the benefits.

GIRLS FOR THE WEST

Mrs. Sanford Expects to Have a Party in Winnipeg in May.

Mrs. Helen Sanford, superintendent of the Girls' Home of Welcome, Winnipeg, is preparing to leave at the end of February for another party of girls for domestic service in Canada. As usual, the girls will be selected and personally conducted by Mrs. Sanford, who has already brought to this country nearly one thousand girls during the past eight years. The fare to be advanced is $47.00 from Great Britain to Winnipeg. $46.00 was quoted in error last week. It has since been decided to bring the party out by one of the larger boats, which costs a little more. The fare of $47.00 will be repaid by the girl from her first six months' wages in Canada, and an engagement for six months is agreed upon by each girl travelling on a prepaid fare. Wages promised for a beginning, in the case of general servants, $10.00 a month; cooks $15.00. All the girls will have had previous experience in housework and will be over the age of eighteen years and under thirty.

Fares and references can be sent to the Girls' Home of Welcome any time up to the first of March, with the following information: Whether the girl is required for town or farm house; if the latter, how far from station and church and number of household. It is expected that the party will be in Winnipeg by the end of May and will at once go forward to their destinations. When sending fares it is kindly requested that cheques be made payable at par in Winnipeg.

WINNIPEG WOMEN'S WORK

"Girls for the West." Announcement in *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 February 1907.

Women and church organisations continued the recruitment of domestic servants for Manitoba homes by offering prepaid

passages. Parties from the British Women's Emigration Association in London passed through the Girls' Home of Welcome but generally did not remain in Manitoba.[10] Most of the women's recruiting for Manitoba homes before 1914 was done by Mrs. Sanford of Winnipeg. Mrs. Sanford began her work individually but soon conducted it in direct conjunction with the Girls' Home of Welcome where she served as superintendent from 1901 to 1909. She selected her domestics in Ireland and England as well as Scotland and, unlike Mrs. Livingstone, she procured girls suited for farm homes. After seeing her first party in 1899, the Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg urged that Mrs. Sanford be supported:

> I have no doubt in my mind whatever that this woman is properly suited for this business. She got the proper kind of girls; all of them had been general servants; most of them could bake and milk cows — different entirely from the class brought out by Mrs. Livingstone, none of whom could bake or milk, and but few of whom were general servants.[11]

Success came too late as government interest in direct action had been forfeited. The immigration branch paid Mrs. Sanford's travel expenses but refused to advance passage fares for her domestics, most of whom received advanced fares from their employers.

Mrs. Sanford brought to Winnipeg almost two thousand domestics between the ages of eighteen and thirty before World War I ended her immigration work. An employer sent the fare and references to the hostel together with information on the location, composition, and religion of the household, and in return received a domestic who agreed to stay six months and pay her debt during that period.[12] Since the fare was almost equivalent to the six months' wages, in order to fulfill the agreement, assisted domestics had to survive their initial adjustment to Canada with practically no money. The hostel board recognised the problem in its report for 1910 but placed the blame on the poverty of the domestic rather than on the system of repayment and expressed as much concern for the quality of domestic service as for the circumstances of the immigrant:

> The fact is to be deplored that so many women and girls to whom fares are advanced arrive here practically without money. Even with positions assured them, no wages are due them for the first four or five months, as they are expected in this time to repay their passage money, and very often a change of position has to be made. The lack of money must often prove a serious handicap to this class of emigrant, and certainly does not always ensure to us the most desirable servants.[13]

With very few exceptions, the assisted domestics refunded their

passage fare. They were given little credit for their integrity by the hostel board, which regarded those who emigrated on their own account as "more experienced, better equipped, and therefore more fitted for life in a new country than the class that has to be assisted to emigrate."[14] The system of an employer advancing the passage fare created serious problems for both the employer and the domestic. Many women were not able to pay their help six months' wages in advance and the burden of debt placed on the domestic made her relations with her employer more difficult. Yet there seemed little choice. When Lillian Beynon of the *Free Press* investigated alternative possibilities at the immigration office, she found that the government would not deviate from its policy of encouraging private enterprise.[15]

World War I interrupted the recruitment of domestic servants from overseas, but, except for a brief period at the beginning of the war, did not reduce the demand for workers. With the resumption of immigration at the end of the war, women's organisations were able to achieve their demand that the government reform procedures in female immigration. The government moved to ensure that "no girl shall go to Canada having round her neck the millstone of contract for payment for passages advanced" by abolishing bonuses to agents and making illegal the system of advanced fares from employers or private agencies.[16] On the other hand, the federal government offered no incentives to replace those which it had eliminated and the immigration of domestics to Manitoba resumed very slowly. With the private option removed, Manitoba government assistance, which was acceptable because it did not bind a domestic to a particular employer, became more important. In 1921, following the example of Ontario and Saskatchewan, the Manitoba government sent a woman agent to the British Isles to recruit domestics suitable for Manitoba farm homes by offering them assisted passages to be refunded to the government. The experiment proved expensive since Mrs. Dickinson, who lacked the experience of the Ontario and Saskatchewan representatives, managed to secure only twenty-five domestics.[17]

In 1923, Canadian acceptance of the Empire Settlement Act, introduced by the British government to encourage empire migration, reduced the need for specific provincial action. Through the Empire Settlement Act, the Canadian government agreed to cooperate with the British government in providing passage loans and, after 1926, drastically reduced fares to young women who agreed to be household workers in Canada for one year. The new Women's Division of the Department of Immigration supervised the domestics who, for Manitoba, were sent to the Winnipeg Home

of Welcome and placed through the provincial employment bureau. Even with the Empire Settlement Act, Manitoba experienced difficulty attracting British domestics. A couple of Manitoba domestics recently interviewed recalled that they chose Manitoba because they knew nothing about Canada and Manitoba seemed central or Winnipeg stood out on the map, but most British domestics wanted to go to Ontario, and especially to Toronto. From 1926 to 1931, approximately nine hundred Empire Settlement Act domestics went to Manitoba, in comparison with over eleven thousand to Ontario.[18] Even in relation to its smaller population Manitoba did not receive an equal share of the British domestics sponsored by Canadian money.

In contrast to the British household workers, the majority of continental European domestics went to western Canada. Government regulations, as well as the presence of friends and relatives in the prairie provinces, determined their destination. Pressure to admit more immigrants from what were called the "non-preferred" countries of central and eastern Europe came not from women's organisations, but from the two major railway companies which were anxious to increase their immigration business. By the Railways Agreement, negotiated in 1925, the federal government authorized the CPR and the Canadian National Railway (CNR) to recruit and place agriculturalists and domestics from the "non-preferred" countries. Although prospective employers in all regions of Canada could nominate a particular domestic known to them, the agreement permitted descriptive applications, otherwise known as bulk orders, only from the three prairie provinces. Hence the railways could generate more business from western Canada. Initially the railways agreed to recruit domestics only for farm placement, but suspected irregularities led to a revised agreement in 1927 which authorized the recruitment of domestics for city employment provided the railways placed them through the office of the District Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg.[19]

Railway authorities considered most domestics from Poland, Hungary, Russia, and Romania to be best suited for the rural districts, at least at first. The majority came from a peasant background but all either had to receive a prepaid ticket from relatives in Canada or have enough resources to pay the passage fare. Railway officials tried to ensure that the women accepted were physically strong, healthy, and accustomed to manual labour, but did not require previous experience in household work;[20] hence, few of those recruited had domestic training or any knowledge of the kind of equipment in Canadian middle-class homes. As the

CNR certificate issuing officer at Warsaw reported:

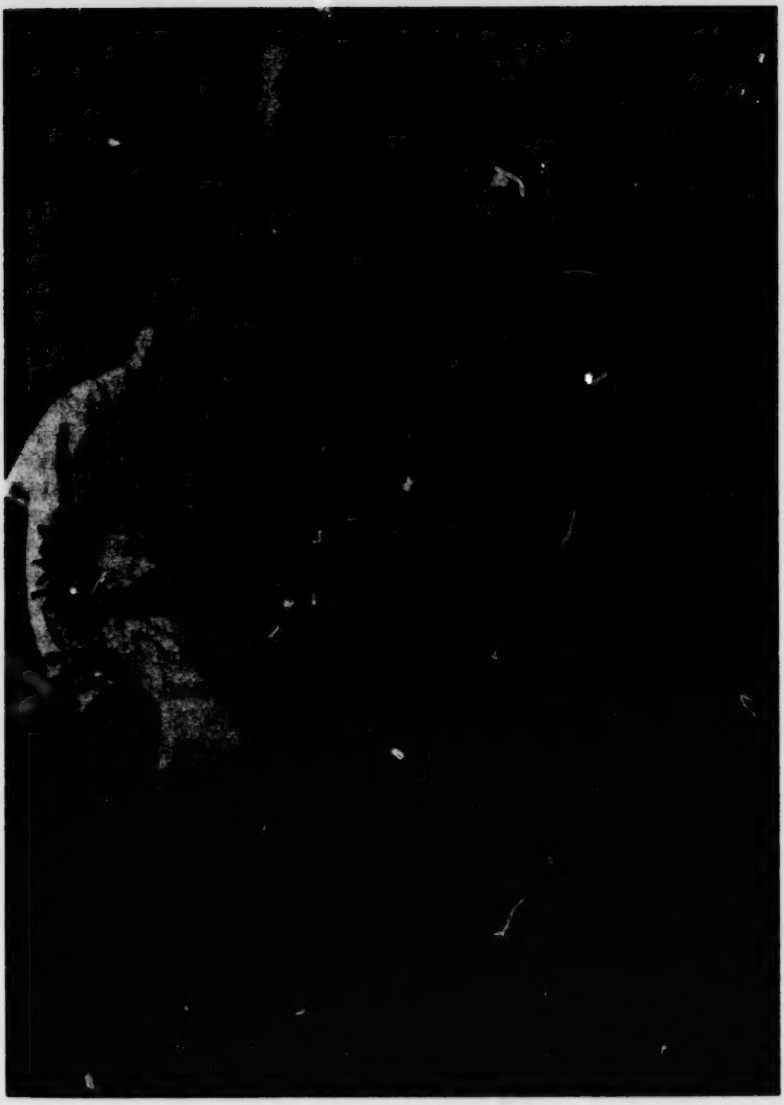
> The average domestic proceeding from Poland or Roumania is of the peasant type, who has always lived in the country, and who has had very little actual training in household work, having been used to working in the fields during the greater part of the year. All are experienced milkers. The home conditions of these people are extremely crude and such as would not be tolerated by people used to Western civilization. From the standpoint of hard work and ability to work equally as well as a man at practically all kinds of farm work, whilst being used to hardships such as attend pioneer settlement I claim these women cannot be surpassed, but it is only after long and careful training that they become capable domestics judged by Western standards.[21]

The operation of the Railways Agreement helps to explain why the number of domestic servants coming to Canada from continental Europe exceeded the number from the British Isles during the period from 1926 to 1930. The proportion that went to Manitoba is not known but the channelling of continental European domestics to western Canada combined with the failure of Manitoba to attract Empire Settlement Act domestics helps to explain a shift in the origin of Manitoba domestics which occurred in the 1920s. In 1921, 60 percent of immigrant domestics in Manitoba were British and 30 percent European. In 1931, the ratios were reversed; 58 percent of immigrant domestics were of European origins and 37 percent of British origin.[22]

Girls and young women among one particular group of eastern European immigrants also assisted by the CPR soon became valued domestics in Winnipeg. In the decade after 1923, approximately twenty thousand Russian Mennonite refugees were brought to Canada by an agreement between the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the CPR. The Mennonite sponsors placed most on farms in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Collectively the new arrivals originally had been prosperous but they had lost everything during the war and the Russian Revolution. In order to become established in Canada and to repay the Mennonite debt to the CPR, all family members had to contribute.[23] Daughters of families who had employed servants in Russia went to work in Canadian homes along with Mennonite girls from poorer backgrounds. As soon as they were old enough to leave school, and often earlier, girls started to work on neighbouring farms and then moved to better positions in villages and in Winnipeg. Young women who arrived in Canada as orphans also immediately became domestics in order to support themselves. Household work was available, did not require time or money for training, and provided an acceptable working environment for

Mennonite *Maedchenheim*, Bannatyne Avenue. Collection: Elizabeth Elias.

Mennonite girls. The girls' wages frequently constituted the main source of cash income for the family and often a Mennonite domestic repaid not only her own passage debt but also that of her entire family.



A group of Mennonite domestic servants in their Sunday best with Helen Epp, the house mother of the *Maedchenheim*, second from left. Collection: Elizabeth Elias.

Winnipeg attracted Mennonite domestics because Winnipeg wages were so much better than the wages paid by Mennonite farmers and villagers. In addition, those who had not had Canadian schooling could learn English in Winnipeg homes. As a result of the movement of Mennonite girls into Winnipeg in advance of other members of the community, the General Conference Board of Missions established a *Maedchenheim* or Girls' Home on Bannatyne Avenue in 1926. Shortly thereafter the Mennonite Brethren began a similar home in Winnipeg, the Mary Martha Home. Like the Winnipeg Home of Welcome, the Mennonite homes provided temporary accommodation for new arrivals and served as a social centre for girls on their Thursday and Sunday afternoons off. The *Maedchenheim* also acted as an employment bureau, receiving applications from employers and making placements. Mennonite girls soon acquired a reputation as honest, reliable workers so the Home could afford to be selective. Perhaps because they felt no ties to the employers, the Mennonite house parents intervened more directly to protect the domestics than did the Home of Welcome authorities. Frequently one of them accompanied the domestic to her prospective situation and inspected the house with her. They removed domestics from homes where they considered conditions to be unsatisfactory and they kept a blacklist of employers to whom they would not send help.[24]

Women reformers who sought to reform female immigration and to increase the supply of immigrant domestics found their efforts reinforced by the government because of its immigration interests, by railway companies because of their business interests and by church organisations because of religious and philanthropic concerns. In addition, while new employment opportunities lured Canadian women from domestic service, economic constraints often directed immigrant women into domestic service. Organised women also achieved reform in the supervision of British domestics, although they suddenly realised in the late 1920s that a large movement of continental European domestics was taking place totally outside their control. On the other hand, when they focussed on the conditions of domestic service, women reformers received little support from government or other agencies. At a time when government increasingly intervened with legislation to protect women in the work force, the sanctuary of the private home remained exempt from outside control.

The major objections to domestic service were well known since they differed little across Canada and changed little during the period from 1890 to 1930. The grievances of Manitoba domestics received greatest newspaper publicity in the years immediately

before World War I as Winnipeg journalists active in the women's movement welcomed to their columns correspondence discussing women's issues and problems. Lillian Beynon (Thomas) in the *Manitoba Free Press*, Pearl Richmond Hamilton and Cora Hind in the *Western Home Monthly*, Francis Marion Beynon in the *Grain Growers' Guide*, and May Clendennan in the *Farmer's Advocate* all reported on the servant problem. Joining in the investigative journalism popular at the time, Pearl Richmond Hamilton, for her column "The Young Woman and Her Problem," visited domestics at work in order to study the situation from the girl's point of view as well as from the perspective of the mistress.[25] More often, information came from letters written to the women's page editors by both domestics and their employers. Some of the liveliest and most sustained interchange of ideas among domestics and between domestics and office girls appeared in Lillian Laurie's correspondence section of the *Free Press* in 1909.[26]

The investigation of the domestic problem revealed cases of mistreatment which the reform-minded journalists found intolerable. Inadequate accommodation in the form of a cold, sparsely furnished attic room or a bed shared with a sick daughter of the house contrasted sharply with the assumption that domestic service provided better living conditions than working-class women could obtain in a boarding house. Some mistresses held back wages which had been earned or refused to pay a girl the amount promised. Certain other employers destroyed the health of their help by overwork. Pearl Richmond Hamilton described the case of a newly arrived English girl who developed pleurisy when her employer gave her almost no assistance with the work for a farm family with six children and two or three hired men. She also noted that the story of Polly, the English girl in Nellie McClung's best-selling *Sowing Seeds in Danny* who contracted typhoid while working for the Motherwells, was based on an actual circumstance.[27] Instances of abuse made domestic service an uncertain proposition for a young woman who had no way of determining in advance the kind of conditions she would encounter in a particular home.

Most of the objections to domestic service raised by young women dealt not with abuses but with the ordinary conditions of employment. Repeatedly, domestics who wrote to the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1909 complained about the long hours and lack of freedom. An English girl explained that her work began at 6:30 A.M. and continued all day until 8 P.M. Parties meant that she kept on working until 2 A.M. with no extra pay.[28] The long and indefinite working day of the domestic seemed particularly onerous in comparison

with the shorter regulated hours of the office or shop girl. A business girl who had done both housework and office work preferred office work because a girl at business "can have every evening from 6, and perhaps Saturday afternoon, and all day on Sunday free. Not to say she goes out every night, but freedom goes a long way and its [*sic*] knowing that she can go if she wants to."[29] The isolation of the private home limited the opportunities for meeting other young women or young men. A British immigrant working on a farm wrote that she had been to town only three times in eight months and knew nobody.[30] A city domestic who had been engaged at housework for two years expressed a similar sense of isolation, stating "the only thing I have against housework is that you seem to be closed in from the world, and have not the chance a business girl has of making friends."[31] Domestics objected to the low social status accorded to housework which they believed restricted their ability to make friends. The loneliness of a young woman in a strange city was felt most acutely by domestic servants who had no home apart from their place of work. A Scottish domestic recounted her experience:

> I remember being out one evening with a girl friend, we both came from Scotland and we were both the youngest of a large family and had always been used to having a nice time in a quiet way. Well, you can imagine how we felt when after taking a walk we got tired, we had no place to go, and our people were all out, so we could not get into our places as they did not allow us a key. Well, at last, my friend proposed that we should go and sit in the railway station. We sat there till it was time to go home. . . . I wrote home that night saying that I was having a nice time and was quite happy here. I could not let them know how lonely I was.[32]

Journalists and domestics agreed that conditions of domestic service were unsatisfactory but interest in reform produced few concrete results. Because so many young women seemed lonely, Lillian Beynon took the initiative in organising a girls' club in Winnipeg. The Girls' Home of Welcome also began a monthly social evening which was reported to be popular. The Sunshine Club of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), met on Friday evenings, a time not usually suitable for domestics, but some churches sponsored Sunday clubs which domestics could join.[33] Action in developing organised activities for the time off did not extend to changing the conditions of employment. Manitoba feminists sought increased rights for women outside the home but seldom if ever queried women's role in the home. Indeed, they frequently based their appeal on woman as guardian of the home and relied on domestic servants to provide the free

time necessary for their activities. Prominent Manitoba feminists and female reformers alike believed in a community of interest rather than in irreconcilable class conflict. Feminists, in particular, stressed the bonds of womanhood. Reporting on the formation of the Political Equality League under the heading "The Sisterhood of Women," Pearl Richmond Hamilton wrote, "women of education, of wealth, and of position are banding themselves together all over the world – not for the sake of voting, but for better wages and for better working conditions for the woman who toils."[34] To improve the position of the woman who toiled in the home, they demanded "fair play" and urged that concern for others should replace indifference. They reinforced their appeal to reasonableness and basic humanity with an interest in the standardisation or professionalisation of domestic service. As Lillian Beynon wrote in the *Free Press* in 1909, "In Germany housekeeping is a profession.... Why cannot we catch up to Germany?"[35]

The idea that making housework a profession would solve the servant problem emerged from the growing domestic science movement. The opening of a Department of Household Science at the Manitoba Agricultural College in 1910 increased public interest in domestic science and brought home economics experts to the province. As explained by the experts, the professionalisation of housework meant applying the business methods of the male sphere to the home as well as raising the status of domestic service to the level of other female occupations such as nursing. The combination of trained workers and efficient management would lead to greater productivity with less work, thus enabling a reduction of hours and an increase in wages. A solution which promised benefits to both mistress and maid inevitably became popular with reformers, but the principle of standardisation proved difficult to implement. Business methods did not fit the home. Work in one-servant households was not specialised and, as long as demand exceeded supply, training could not be enforced. Furthermore, housewives resented any suggestion of regulatory interference with the private sphere of the home. Hence, discussion of standardisation did not lead to action. In the early twentieth century, the increased use of domestic technology did eliminate much of the drudgery of housework in urban middle-class homes but did not change the personal relationship between mistress and maid or the low social status accorded to domestic service. In many respects the new technology reinforced the isolation of the private home and encouraged improved standards which mitigated against any reduction in hours of work. Nevertheless, domestics generally preferred to work in homes where modern appliances

reduced the physical labour of housework. Before World War I, municipal plumbing and electric lighting systems created a gap in comfort and convenience between middle-class Winnipeg homes and most Manitoba rural homes. The distinction grew in the 1920s as an array of appliances powered by electricity became cheaper, more reliable, and more commonly used in city homes. The *Manitoba Free Press*, with its electrical and building section, its Winnipeg Hydro ads and its ads from appliance manufacturers and stores, almost deified the electrical home in the years immediately after the war. Widely read in rural districts as well as in Winnipeg, the *Free Press* undoubtedly contributed to the sense of rural deprivation.[36]

The farm women's movement, growing in strength during and after the war, sought to reform conditions in the farm home, arguing that the wife's work in the home was as important for the success of the farm business as the husband's labour in the fields. In order to obtain information to support demands for improvement, the United Farm Women of Manitoba conducted a survey of home conditions among its members in the early 1920s. Problems in the structure of the questionnaire produced variations in response that hinder assessment, but it is obvious that few women had help on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, compared to the total survey, a disproportionately large percentage of the homes with help also possessed electric lighting and some form of water and machine power.[37] The response, which was not as complete as the executive had expected, definitely revealed the heavy workload of the farm wife but the knowledge did not lead to significant changes.

Neither urban nor rural reformers in Manitoba achieved changes in the conditions of domestic service which overcame the standard objections of young women to work in homes. Although the proportion of Manitoba domestic servants who were born outside Canada actually declined in the 1920s as the province moved out of the period of rapid general immigration and settlement, the efforts to increase the supply of domestics through immigration did help to maintain the tradition of live-in domestic service.[38] Conditions continued to vary greatly from one home to another. Although labour-saving devices reduced drudgery, technological advances did not necessarily lead to better treatment and sometimes employers with the best equipped homes had great difficulty keeping help. Some domestics who found kind employers enjoyed the flexibility of their work and preferred domestic service to store or factory work; others suffered from situations where the wages were too low, the work was too hard or the employer

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Winnipeg Hydro Advertisement, "The Clean-Up Campaign," *Manitoba Free Press*, 6 May 1922.

was too interested in establishing her social status at the expense of the maid. If dissatisfied, domestics exercised the major control which they possessed over conditions of employment — they moved.

Notes

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1 The proportion of Manitoba servants working in Winnipeg was 38.6 percent (2,281 of 5,905) in 1911, 39 percent (1,983 of 5,075) in 1921, and 45 percent (4,782 of 10,529) in 1931. Calculated from *Census of Canada*, Occupations, 1911, 1921, 1931.
2 *Fifth Census of Canada*, 1911, VI Occupations, Table 6.
3 Provincial Archives of Manitoba [PAM] MG 10, C45, Box 1, Winnipeg Council of Women Minutes, 5 February 1897, Minutes of Third Annual Meeting.
4 Public Archives of Canada [PAC] RG 76, Immigration Branch, File 33136-1, Girls' Home of Welcome, Charles W. Gordon to Sifton, 6 January 1897; First Annual Report of the Girls' Home of Welcome Association, 1898.
5 Ibid., Annual Meeting Girls' Home of Welcome, 10 April 1901. In 1911 an addition was built to the Hostel as the dining and reception rooms were too small for large parties. Fifteenth Annual Report, Girls' Home of Welcome, 1911.
6 PAC RG 76, File 22787-1, Smart to Murray, 27 December 1897.
7 Ibid., Files 22787-1, 22787-2. Correspondence in the Immigration Branch records provides the basis for the account of Mrs. Livingston's activities.
8 Ibid., Murray to McCreary, 11 May 1898.
9 Ibid., Murray to Smart, 4 June 1898.
10 Ibid., RG 76, File 33136-2, Girls' Home of Welcome, Fifteenth Annual Report, 1911.
11 Ibid., File 22787-2, McCreary to Pedley, 21 June 1899.
12 *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 February 1907, and numbers also calculated from Girls' Home of Welcome Annual Reports, 1899-1914.
13 PAC RG 76. File 33136-2, Fourteenth Annual Report, Girls' Home of Welcome, 1910.
14 Ibid.
15 *Manitoba Free Press*, 30 January 1909.
16 PAC RG 76, File 22787-9, J. Obed Smith to F.C. Salter, 1 December 1919.
17 Ibid., File 990544, Assisted Passages — Manitoba Government, Robson to Hon. George Malcolm, Minister of Agriculture, Winnipeg, 28 May 1921; Robson to McClure, 12 July 1921.
18 Ibid., File 22787, Report by Miss MacFarlane to Mr. Joliff on the establishment and work of the women's division, 3 August 1944.
19 Ibid., RG 76, File 216882-3, Railways Agreement, Blair to Burnham, Memorandum, 23 December 1926; Memorandum for Hon. Robert Forke, 18 January 1927; File 216882-4, Deputy Minister to Black, CNR, and Dennis, CPR, 11 February 1927; Memorandum Blair to Egan, 29 March 1927.
20 Ibid., File 216882-6, Black to Blair, 28 July 1927.
21 Ibid.

22 *Census of Canada*, 1921, Occupations by birthplace, 754, and *Census of Canada*, 1931, Occupations by birthplace, 356.

23 Frank Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: the rescue and resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen, 1962).

24 Information from interviews with Mennonite women now living in Winnipeg, Ontario, and British Columbia. Also Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature Library, Oral History Collection, Tape #45, Miss Anna Theissen interviewed by A. Grenke, 26 August 1971.

25 *Western Home Monthly*, April 1912.

26 Lillian Laurie was the name used by Lillian Beynon (Thomas).

27 *Western Home Monthly*, August 1911.

28 *Manitoba Free Press*, 27 September 1909.

29 Ibid., 1 October 1909.

30 Ibid., 7 October 1909.

31 Ibid., 9 October 1909.

32 Ibid., 15 October 1909.

33 Ibid., 5, 9, 18, 22, October, 21 December 1909.

34 *Western Home Monthly*, July 1912.

35 *Manitoba Free Press*, 18 October 1909.

36 PAM MG 10, E 1, Box 12, Box 20, United Farm Women of Manitoba, 1922 Farm Survey indicates that 239 of 364 farm homes surveyed or 65.6 percent took the *Free Press*. I wish to thank Mary Kinnear for giving me access to her computer analysis of the Farm Survey.

37 Ibid., 51 of the 364 women who returned the questionnaire employed help at some time but only 13 of those, or one in 28 households, had help on a yearly basis. Of the 51 households with help, 12 or 23.5 percent had electric lights, 29 or 56.8 percent had machine power, and 30 or 58.8 percent had water in the kitchen. Of the 313 households that did not employ help, 21 or 6.7 percent had electric lights, 118 or 37.6 percent had machine power, and 96 or 30.6 percent had water in the kitchen. The statistics are based on my own calculations combined with the computer analysis of Mary Kinnear.

38 72 percent of Manitoba domestics were born outside Canada in 1911, 53 percent in 1921, and 37 percent in 1931. Calculated from *Census of Canada*, Occupations by birthplace, 1911, 1921, 1931.

The Professionalisation of Women Workers in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Churches of Canada

Nancy Hall

Women have always worked in Canadian Protestant churches. However, they have been historically denied access to established church structures and have had to organise church societies for "women only." Women have also been denied voting participation and membership in church courts. It is only these courts — the conferences, synods, councils, and assemblies — that officially interpret and act upon church social and ecclesiastical issues. Thus, women have had little influence in policy-making decisions. However, an examination of what women's work in the Protestant churches was like and how women workers saw that work suggests that women were not merely passive observers of change in the church. Women lay and volunteer workers in the United Church of Canada and its two antecedent churches — the Presbyterian church in Canada and the Methodist church of Canada — sought both social equality with men and recognition of the importance of their work. It was the success of the female volunteer organisations that both established and gave initiative to the search for professional identity on the part of women workers in the church. This search for a professional identity was a desire that seemed perfectly suited to many female workers of the middle classes. Professionalisation incorporates the idea of an increase in social status. At least until the 1930s, church women were searching for recognition of their work through the achievement of a social status equal to men. It was only when that recognition was denied them that women began to accept the idea that they had to demand full equality through legal power.

The period in Canadian history that began around 1880 witnessed the development and rapid growth of national women's organisations. Several reasons help to explain this exceptional advance in women's activities. Transportation improved enough to ease the initial frontier difficulties of contact between women. The increasing urbanisation of Canadian society widened the potential membership base for women's organisations. More

women were remaining single and the birth rate for married women was declining dramatically. Increasing social affluence and an expanding middle class left more women with leisure time, as did the increasing separation of the workplace from the home. Advances in technology and the availability of domestic help decreased the time middle-class women spent with domestic duties. However, women did not become involved simply because they had nothing else to do. They were strongly motivated by their sense of Christian duty. "[Women] showed great enthusiasm for personal and family religion, as opposed to the purely church-based ritual from which they were excluded. Being so much outside a male-dominated institution, they were perhaps better placed than men to see its deficiencies, and their religious enthusiasm made them anxious to assist on repairing them."[1]

At the same time that women's material conditions were changing, Canada was being transformed into a mature, industrial capitalist society. Changes in the Canadian social fabric did not leave Canadian Protestant churches untouched. Scientific and historical criticism had already challenged the ethical and intellectual foundations of their Christian beliefs.[2] Protestant denominations experimented with theological innovation as they moved from a strict Calvinist interpretation of redemption to a more democratic and voluntary salvation. Also, the social issues that arose from the transformation of society led to the need to respond to the new demands of immigration and industrialisation.

The church's practical response was consolidation and organisation through the union of smaller churches and the organisation of church boards, conferences, and synods. Voluntary associations and church committees were formed to support religious aims. Most importantly, the social dislocation provided the impetus for a reform movement. The rise of the Social Gospel in Canadian Protestant churches from the 1890s through to the 1930s attempted to deal with this dislocation by reshaping Canadian society into a Christian community. The rise of the Social Gospel impulse in Canadian Protestant churches parallels the rise of women's organisations in those churches. They came to depend to a great degree, in their philanthropic work, on female volunteer organisations. "The simultaneous appearance of a militant Protestantism in need of workers and a large group of willing and able women encouraged the rapid development of female voluntary associations."[3]

The first female volunteer workers channelled their concerns into areas that were an extension of their traditional duties: teaching, nurturing, and private charity for the poor, the sick,

and the aged. Prior to the development of missionary organisations specifically for women, female involvement in the church was limited to the local church community. Spiritual organisations saw to the distribution of tracts and district visiting. Women were also active in prayer associations which saw to the "spiritual oversight and instruction of members of the Church of their own sex who meet weekly for Christian counsel and conversation."[4] By 1900 approximately two-thirds, or twenty-two thousand, of all Sunday school teachers in the Methodist church were women. The first formal organisation of church women was also at the local congregational level with the development of Ladies Aids, Women's Guilds, and Dorcas Sewing Circles.

The date of organisation of the first Canadian Ladies Aid Society appears to have been about 1832.[5] The objectives of these societies were local congregational ones — furnishing parsonages, assisting ministers, supplying churches with carpeting, hymnbooks, pianos, and heating plants. Their duties also included relief for the poor, visiting strangers, visiting the aged or infirm of the congregation, and the furnishing of local hospitals. Many aid societies shouldered the major financial burden of the church mortgage. By the 1890s there were over 1,350 such societies in the Canadian Methodist church alone and they were contributing, on average, an astonishing one hundred thousand dollars a year for parish work.[6] The Ladies Aids never possessed more than local congregational organisation and were not an officially recognised part of the general structures of either the Methodist or Presbyterian churches. At no time was there a central organisation to provide coordination and direction. In fact, it was not until church union in 1925 that Ladies Aids had a constitution recognised by the church.

The organisation of provincial and national female missionary societies provides the clearest example of the desire of lay women to organise nationally for useful purpose. Prior to the formalisation of the Presbyterian and Methodist missionary movements, women's missionary groups were being organised on a local basis. In 1825, Prince Edward Island women organised the "Prince Town Female Society for Propagating the Gospel and Other Religious Purpose."[7] By 1841 an interdenominational Ladies Society, in conjunction with the French-Canadian Missionary Society of Montreal, was supporting a missionary. This group of women, reorganised under the auspices of the Presbyterian church as the Ladies French Evangelisation Society, opened a mission house in Montreal in 1876.[8] The Church of Scotland Ladies Auxiliary was also actively involved in French evangelisation work in this

period. However, it was the Presbyterian church women of Belleville, Ontario who provided the nucleus for the formation of a Women's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS). Under the aegis of the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Committee, this society was formally organised at the second General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in Canada of 1876.[9] The same year saw the formation of the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal church in Canada. Two years later, the General Conference of the Methodist church in Canada authorized the organisation of a nation-wide Woman's Missionary Society which was formally constituted in 1881.[10]

The goals articulated by missionary society women indicate that they were motivated by a deep concern and a sense of responsibility for mission work for women. Recognising the evangelical nature of their church's mission work, these women saw their special task as the bringing of the good news of Christianity to the five hundred million women living in non-Christian countries.[11] Each organisation's objectives were the same; "to aid the [all-male] Foreign Mission Committee by promoting its work among women and children" of foreign countries.[12] Both churches' female mission societies were auxiliary to the male mission committees and men retained administrative and financial control of the organisations.

By the end of the nineteenth century, these female missionary society volunteers, buoyed by their successes in established work, became more confident about initiating work of their own. They began to take a keener interest in better educational and vocational opportunities for both women abroad and their own female workers. Emphasis began to be placed on the training of indigenous female leaders and workers. Presbyterian women began "taking a deeper interest in young women offering their services to the Foreign Mission work." In 1890 they assumed the responsibility for examining female applicants for mission work and accompanying these candidates before the Foreign Mission Committee.[13] The Methodist Woman's Missionary Society also became involved in the training of female workers and resolved, in 1893, that each female candidate for Christian work attend a Training Home. They also established and administered a Rest Fund for retired female missionaries and established scholarships for women entering training.

At the same time a handful of clergymen and women began agitating for the establishment of the office of deaconess in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, an office which they hoped would establish a vocation for women who wished to serve the

church in Canada. Mary Daniels, in *The Methodist Magazine and Review*, wrote, "The time is fast approaching when the organised benevolent work of women must have a recognised place in the economy of the church."[14] That same year, 1890, the Methodist General Conference was memorialised by the Toronto and Montreal Conferences "to legislate for the establishment of a sisterhood," and also by the Conferences of Bay of Quinte and Niagara. The Methodist Conference, although "feeling the importance of a more definite recognition of women's work," recommended instead that each Annual Conference could, "if deemed desirable," legislate for "a systematic organization of consecrated women as will give them an official relation to the Church, similar to the order of Deaconesses in the primitive Church." The Methodist Conference, while approving of the establishment of a Deaconess Order, felt that Canadian society was not yet ready to have females employed in the work of the church. Referring the issue to the Committee on the State of the Work, it stated:

> being in fullest sympathy with the employment of women in the work of the Church and knowing that every encouragement is given for the exercise of their talents in promoting the work of God is persuaded that the time has not come, in this country, for the establishment of an order of Deaconesses.[15]

A Methodist minister, A.M. Phillips, then turned to a handful of Toronto Methodist church women to seek their help in establishing a Deaconess Order in Canada. With no deaconesses at work in either church, a connection was established with Lucy Rider Meyer's Methodist Deaconess Home in Chicago. Young women had been working in Methodist missions as early as 1876. Because Canada lacked the training facilities, these women had to be sent to a Methodist Deaconess Training Institute in New York. To remedy this situation, and without waiting for official church sanction, these Toronto Methodist women established a Deaconess Aid Society in 1893. The following year a Methodist Deaconess Home and Training School was opened with the express purpose of establishing a Deaconess Order in Canada. Two years later, the first three women were designated as Methodist deaconesses. However, the Methodist Conference only officially recognised a "Deaconess Society," essentially a board of management for the Training Home, and not the Deaconess Order itself.[16]

Presbyterian women, specifically the WFMS, also took the initiative in establishing a training centre for female church workers. In 1893 the WFMS discussed the matter of utilising a proposed nondenominational Deaconess Home but felt at the time

that this training school was of no use to their workers.[17] Four years later, the WFMS provided the impetus for the opening of the Ewart Missionary Training Home. In 1901 the Ewart Home was unofficially (that is, without church sanction) broadened in scope to include women training for church work at home. In effect the WFMS had organised a Deaconess Order that was independent of church policy. In 1904 the WFMS approached the executive of the Foreign Mission Committee requesting that the Ewart Home be made "a more recognised institution of the Church." These women also requested that a joint committee be established by the General Assembly to officially "enlarge the scope of the Ewart Home."[18] It was not until the General Assembly received an overture from the Synod of Manitoba in 1907, asking for the establishment of a Deaconess Order, that it acted. The General Assembly established a Committee on an Order of Deaconesses and in 1909 directions were issued for the establishment of a Presbyterian Deaconess Order.[19] The Ewart Home became the Ewart Missionary and Deaconess Training Home. At this time control of the training school and the Deaconess Order was taken away from the WFMS and put in the hands of a (predominately male) board of management. This board became the Deaconess Board of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Prospective deaconesses were to be single, between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five, in excellent physical health, with a university matriculation or its equivalent in a nursing diploma or teaching certificate, and a member in good standing of a Methodist or Presbyterian congregation.[20] The majority of applicants appear to have been daughters of either ministers or women's society members. All had a strong Christian family background and responded to their church's call for "Christian commitment" in the same way their brothers responded to the call of the ministry. Although no vow of perpetual service was asked for (in fact deaconesses were expected to withdraw if they married), all deaconesses were required to reside in a deaconess home, wear a prescribed uniform and survive with little remuneration. "No salaries shall be paid, the work of the Deaconess being done for the love of Christ, and in his Name."[21] When the churches did begin to pay salaries their motivation appears to have been their fear of losing candidates to other types of work that paid a decent salary.[22]

Deaconess education at the Training School was to prepare her for her difficult role as evangelist, social worker, teacher, and nurse. The purpose of the School was "to furnish Biblical and practical training" for young women.[23] The original course of study

for both churches was seven months, but this was soon extended to a two-year programme when it became apparent deaconess education had to keep in step with expanding opportunities in secular education for women in nursing, teaching, and social work.[24] Once the female students had completed their prescribed course and passed their exams, a certificate was issued and the deaconess was placed on two years' probation. Upon completion of the probationary service, deaconesses were fully designated as members of the Deaconess Society or Order at a specific church service. It was made clear that "such designation is not, however, to be regarded as an ordination."[25] Presbyterian deaconesses were appointed to their work on a yearly basis. The appointments were made in conjunction with the wishes of the deaconess and no restrictions were placed on the length of service in any one appointment. Methodist deaconess stationing was done without consultation and, until 1918, each stationing was for a maximum of three years.

The churches viewed their deaconess movements as an extension of the church mission to society. Deaconesses ministered to the neediest at home and their work became a reflection of Christ's "ministry of mercy." They were one of the church's key resources in the work of "Christianising" and "Canadianising" the immigrants who came to Canada. Quoting from the Deaconess Society general rules, describing the work of the deaconess,

> the duties of the Deaconess are to minister to the poor, visit the sick, pray for the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, labor to save the sinning, and devote themselves fully to such forms of Christian work as may be suited to their abilities.[26]

The major focus of deaconess work was in the inner-city missions but they also established schools, industrial homes, orphanages, redemptive homes (for unwed mothers), charitable institutions, settlement houses, and hospitals and churches for the poor. Deaconess work in the urban areas was directed toward the women and children of immigrant families. It focussed on the three main areas established by the work of the women's missionary societies: evangelism, education, and medical assistance. Deaconesses served established city churches as congregational workers, but they were also pioneer social workers, meeting the needs of families through charity and social aid. They became involved in the expanding city social services — Associated Charities, Children's Aid, Juvenile Court, and prison work. They undertook the church's moral and social reform work including

temperance, suppression of gambling, and campaigns against "personal, social, and political impurity" and white slavery. Deaconesses lobbied for the securing and enforcement of laws designed to improve existing social conditions: better public housing legislation, improvements in sanitation regulations, improved public health standards, milk depots, baby clinics, and compulsory education. Work in the inner city presented not only a fundamental change in the direction of the work of the church but, for the women involved, a radical break from their middleclass past.

In spite of the enormous importance of the work of the deaconess, she was no more independent in her relation to the church than she was in her salary or living arrangements. She was not an official of either the Methodist or Presbyterian churches but a member of a lay movement in the sevice of that church. In the Methodist church, the Deaconess Home Board of Management, consisting of seven ministers, seven laymen, and seven women, had the responsibility of overseeing the Deaconess Society. Not until 1904 did one representative deaconess become an ex officio member of this board. It was not until 1908 that the Deaconess Society became an official part of Methodist national structure and not until 1922 that the official label "Deaconess Order" was brought into use. Prior to this date, the entire deaconess programme was outlined without the use of an official title. Deaconesses at work were under the direction and superintendency of a local church minister or the local conference board.[27] In the Presbyterian church the relation of deaconesses to the church was through the Ewart Home Board of Management and, again, deaconesses had no representation on this board.[28]

While the work and worth of the deaconess grew steadily in repute, questions about her status within the church and official recognition of the importance of her ministry led her into conflict with the church hierarchy. Was the deaconess part of the clergy or the laity? Even those church members who argued in favour of some form of clerical recognition for deaconesses were careful to state that deaconesses were not ordained and that their work was a special sphere of service "for women only."[29] By 1910 deaconesses were agitating for ex officio membership on the church quarterly official boards where they were stationed. A 1914 memorial from a number of active deaconesses asked that provisions be made "to recognize the deaconesses and place the order under the direction of Annual Conference."[30] No action was taken on this recommendation until 1921, but even this move did not give deaconesses access to the courts of the church. Also, the 1918 endorsement of the deaconess movement by the Methodist church

did little to raise its status. At this time deaconesses were given connectional status, as a lay group, but were still excluded from the decision-making bodies of the church.[31]

The deaconess movement also often suffered from serious financial difficulties, due entirely to its connectional status. A 1918 request to the Methodist church to place the maintenance of the Training School under the direction of the Education Society, as were the other church theological schools, was denied.[32] A 1922 proposal to include the deaconess work in the proposed "benefit" or fundraising project for church departments was similarly denied.[33] In 1922, a strongly worded memorial from twenty-six Methodist deaconesses "in active service throughout Canada" demanded recognition of and support for the deaconess order. It stated:

> the deaconess work does not occupy the place of importance in the activities and religious life of the church that it ought to . . . the deaconesses request the General Conference to enact such legislation as shall place the deaconess order in a position to do more effective work, or if this is impossible to disband the order of deaconesses.[34]

The Methodist General Conference responded by establishing a Deaconess Work Committee consisting of twenty-six ministers, twenty-six laymen, and five women — but no deaconesses.

Presbyterian deaconesses were expressing the same dissatisfaction with their status. They had asked for a special committee on the status of deaconesses, which reported in 1922 to the General Assembly.[35] The Committee expressed the conviction that "in its government the church lacks the feminine element," that is, no women or women workers had access to positions in the church courts. The report encouraged the General Assembly to give absolute equality to women in church management and on its governing bodies and, particularly, that Sessions and Presbyteries should include deaconesses in their organisational structure. Due to church union negotiations between the Methodists and Presbyterians, the work of both committees was put on the back burner. The entire question of the status of female professionals in the church would be inherited by the new United Church of Canada.

As female church workers struggled to come to terms with the newly formed United Church of Canada they raised issues which concerned the church's attitudes to both women and women workers. Given the advances made by women in the achievement of suffrage and more equal job access, it was inevitable that the

whole question of female participation in lay and professional leadership would arise. It was the newly formed church that had to come to terms with the basic issue of securing equal status with men for both trained and volunteer women. Members of the Woman's Missionary Society voiced their concerns about their relation to the church boards and conferences. Trained women workers, particularly those who sought designation as deaconesses, continued to pursue their desire for acceptance as professional workers. Both groups of women wished to demonstrate their competency and the validity of the service they rendered the church. These were not attempts to gain power but to achieve status within the church and recognition of the importance of their church work.

The post-union period also witnessed the secularisation of the church's social reform activities. In an increasingly secular society, specialisation in the social service field led to a drift away from the religious influence of the church. Adding to the effects of secularisation was the fact that social programmes were not clearly defined within the church and appeared low in priority. The church's apparent loss of social initiative affected trained female church workers in two ways. As programmes were not expanded, or actually cut back, there was little need for additional workers. Also, the lack of priority for social reform provided little encouragement for women to choose church service. During the initial church reorganisation, it also became clear that women's work was excluded from the struggle for preeminence between various church committees. Many women left the church and increasing numbers chose to pursue professional work outside the church. Those who remained continued to bring recommendations before the United Church General Council on behalf of salaried female church workers.

The views of the United Church regarding lay and professional women were clearly enunciated in official reactions to two 1928 United Church reports, *The Report from the Committee on Employed Women Workers* and *The Report on the Ordination of Women.*[36] The Committee on Employed Women Workers, first appointed in 1926, had as its mandate the question of a permanent policy regarding the scope of deaconess work and of other trained women workers; "A study, in fact, of church work as a vocation for women."[37] The committee initially embarked on a survey of all employed women in the church and of those ministers and boards that employed them. It hoped to ascertain exactly how women were employed and by whom, what the nature of their work was, their training, and their remuneration. On the basis

of this survey the committee was to decide what type of women the United Church needed as leaders, what preparations these women should secure, and, most importantly, what status women workers should have.

The committee reported to the 1928 General Council. The report indicated that the various kinds of professional and nonprofessional work done by women in the United Church utilised non-deaconess personnel in far larger numbers than they utilised designated deaconesses. In all, 116 women were members of the deaconess order, out of nearly one thousand women who were employed by the church and its educational and service institutions. The committee addressed the reasons so few women sought professional identity through designation. It concluded that the major reason the deaconess order did not attract and retain larger numbers of qualified women was the lack of status of the order:

> It would seem that the chief reason for this attitude [not seeking designation] may have been that the order has not received from the Church as a whole, such recognition as would make membership in it sufficiently significant. While the majority of young women entering the service of the Church today are more concerned about finding and training for the special work which they desire to do than they are about status, nevertheless, the status offered them might be of such a nature as to give them a deeper sense of vocation, and an opportunity to render more effective service.[38]

The second part of the committee report considered two other proposals "affecting the work and status of women in the United Church," found in the 1928 *Report on the Ordination of Women.*[39] The first proposal was that women be admitted to the full ministry of the word and the sacraments, that is that they be ordained as ministers. Or, as an alternative (highly favoured by the authors of the ordination report), that the diaconate of women be recognised as a special order of the ministry. The committee recognised that either of the above proposals "would open to women a higher status than the one for which in the past they have been asked to qualify, the deaconess order."[40] It expressed the belief that if a female diaconate became an integral part of the church ministry it "would mark a real advance, as the present Deaconess Order carries with it no such status." Although it expressed no opinion on the female ordination proposal, the committee acknowledged that some women were capable of preaching but did not want to see the forms of service they could pursue limited only to preaching. There was the proviso, however, that the authority to preach and to baptise, where necessary, could be granted to the deaconess.

The Committee on Women Workers went on to make recommendations based on the possibility that the church would refuse to ordain women or establish a special ministry for women. These recommendations, if accepted, would have improved the status of the order. The first recommendation stated that the training of female church workers should be gradually raised "so as to approximate more nearly to that required of candidates for the ministry." The other recommended that deaconesses be made ex officio members of their congregational official boards, members of the session, and corresponding members of Presbytery.[41] This last section of the report also dealt with the weaknesses of the situation: the lack of uniformity in training and the lack of a unified board to oversee employment. The committee also castigated the church for its lack of support, suggesting that women's work in the church was handicapped "by the lack of assurance of continued employment and by insufficient remuneration."[42]

Unfortunately, the 1928 General Council did not accept female ordination, create a female diaconate, or accept any of the recommendations of the committee. It did, however, establish a permanent Inter-Board Committee on Employed Women Workers and the Deaconess Order. This board continued to agitate for recognition of female church workers through a policy that "would place Church work as a vocation for women in an established and dignified position."[43] It continued to speak out on the need for greater female representation on boards and committees and to pressure the church to allow women access to the rights, activities, and responsibilities available to church men. It also established higher professional standards for admission and training and helped women workers themselves to organise to improve their status. The Fellowship of Professional Women in the United Church of Canada was established to provide a bond between professional female church workers, missionaries, deaconesses, female ministers, and educators, to develop interest in the professional services of church women, and to contribute to the development of church policy and practice.[44]

The work done by church women has led to a reappraisal of the ideas held about turn-of-the-century middle-class women. It has too often been assumed that they were passive spectators to the rapid changes that occurred in Canadian society and in the Canadian churches. However, women workers made enormous contributions that improved Canadian society. They also developed an expertise which gave them the courage to agitate for improvement of their status within the church. Women's entry into the

world of church reform work did much to persuade critics that women could perform as effectively as men. Their example destroyed one of the crucial arguments utilised by opponents to female ordination. The difficulties encountered by paid female workers and their WFMS counterparts with the church hierarchy persuaded these women to throw their full support behind the female ordination movement in the early thirties. The realisation that they served the church but had neither independence nor rights gave added weight to the successful campaign for female ordination. In 1936 United Church women obtained full ecclesiastical equality with men when they won the right to be ordained as ministers.

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Women in the Winnipeg Garment Trade, 1929-45

James D. Mochoruk and Donna Webber

Over the years historians have become well acquainted with the conditions that factory life brought to bear upon garment workers. The litany of problems — low wages, dreadful working conditions and long hours of monotonous labour — is known to almost every social historian. Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to use this knowledge to portray these predominantly female workers as passive victims of the factory owners. This, however, is a misleading view, for while these people were victims of employers, of a sexist and bigoted society and of the very mode of production, the evidence suggests that they were hardly passive.

Collectively and individually these women devised and implemented strategies to combat or at least mitigate their exploitation: unionisation, random strikes, industry-wide strikes, private deals with bosses and a myriad of other tactics were all employed by these workers during the 1930s and 1940s. What follows is really little more than a preliminary chronicle of some of these struggles and the conditions that gave rise to them. It is hoped, however, that this paper will also serve as a spur to further research along similar lines.

At the onset of the Great Depression approximately one thousand women were employed in Winnipeg's garment factories. Even taking into account the seasonal fluctuations in employment common to the needle trades and the unemployment caused by the bankruptcy of several shops between 1930 and 1934, this figure of one thousand female workers remained fairly constant until 1936-37. Between 1937 and 1945, however, the effect of a general economic recovery followed by the massive demand for uniforms and work clothing during the war years caused this number to rise to over twenty-five hundred.[1]

As these numbers indicate, the garment trade was an important source of employment for women throughout the entire period under consideration. More importantly, it was one of the few industries where working-class women from immigrant families could find jobs. Unlike their more affluent middle-class sisters, the women of the needle trades had neither the money nor the op-

portunity to secure the education necessary to enter the so-called women's professions of teaching or nursing. Even the type of jobs held by Anglo-Saxon working-class women were out of reach to these workers, for the combined effect of ethnic prejudice and an immigrant's poor command of English or possession of an accent disqualified most of these women from obtaining work as sales people or clerical workers. For these reasons, the employment opportunities for these predominantly Jewish, Ukrainian, Polish, German and Russian women were few. Indeed, aside from the garment factories, the only other work open to these women was within the field of domestic labour as charwomen, cooks and servants, and these positions paid even less than the notoriously bad wages available in the sweatshops of the garment trade.[2]

Clearly, the women of the garment industry were in an extremely vulnerable situation, for they really had nowhere else to go. To make matters worse, the needle trade was, by definition, a highly unstable, competitive and labour intensive industry where costs could most easily be reduced by cutting wages. Factory owners, many of whom were hovering on the brink of insolvency, sought to cope with the depressed market conditions of the 1930s by slashing wages and enforcing production increases. Knowing that their female labour force had almost no other job opportunities, the employers were certain that the workers would accept these measures with little or no protest. Indeed, given the circumstances of the early 1930s the owners should have been right. All kinds of men and women were looking for work and gladly would have taken these jobs, which paid from two dollars to nine dollars per week.[3] Single women in particular, who found it almost impossible to qualify for relief, were clamouring for the unskilled and semiskilled work available in the clothing factories and fur shops of Winnipeg.

While economic logic might have been on the side of the owners as they attempted to shore up profit margins at the expense of their workers, they clearly did not know how to judge the mood of their employees. Regardless of the huge reserve army of labour that the Depression had created in Winnipeg, and regardless of their own inflexible position within the labour market, these women were not about to accept lower wages and longer hours of work without a fight. These young women (whose ages tended to range from sixteen to thirty-five) had already put up with an incredible number of hardships and were not about to accept any more.[4] Thus, between 1930 and 1935 a series of more than twenty strikes rocked the needle trades as both male and female workers fought to preserve what little economic security they possessed.[5]

Without going into the details of the strike demands, it is fair to say that it was the wage cuts introduced during the early 1930s which drove the workers to rebel. These cuts, which began with an 8 percent wage reduction for regular machine operators and 25 percent for special machine operators in the men's garment trade, were the first of many which reduced wages in the needle trades to approximately 50 percent of their pre-1929 levels.[6] What had once been jobs that at least provided a meagre living now seemed to be little better than slave labour. At the same time the working conditions, hours of labour and layoffs that had been barely tolerable when wages were liveable now became further fuel for the fires of industrial revolt.

For example, even in the relatively good days of the 1920s when a female machine operator or finisher could make anywhere from six dollars to twelve dollars per week, seasonal unemployment was a constant feature of needle trade life. On average, an operator would be lucky to work forty-four out of fifty-two weeks per year, which meant that her wages had to be stretched to cover a two-month period of unemployment. As the Depression began to take its toll by constricting markets for clothing, needle trades workers found themselves facing even longer lay offs. In 1931 the yearly average fell to forty-one weeks worked, while in 1936 this figure had dropped to 38.5 weeks of employment per year.[7] Individual case studies reveal an even sorrier record of employment with some employees being laid off for two months at a time twice a year (between the two major work seasons), while others were forced to go on relief for five or six months at a time — and this option was only readily available to those workers who were married.[8]

Most of the statistics available for this period do not, of course, fully account for the ever-increasing number of part-time workers who were employed by factory owners during the 1930s as a way of avoiding minimum wage legislation. Nor do they account for the effect of creative bookkeeping on the owners' part, which included practises such as the placing of two women's pay in one envelope or listing experienced operators as learners. In the same vein, these statistics do not indicate how prevalent short-time became or how often piece-rate workers would be called in to do a few hours of work and then be forced to sit idle, and unpaid, for the majority of the day.[9]

These slack periods were interspersed by periods of absolutely frantic activity. When the orders for winter or summer clothes were finally received by the manufacturer the regular forty-four hour work week was often extended to fifty or even sixty hours so that the owner could meet the deadline established by the pur-

chaser. Unfortunately, while there were provisions in the United Garment Workers of America contract for time and a quarter for overtime work, this agreement had become a dead letter by the early 1930s. Thus, the workers put in most of their overtime at straight time.[10]

As if all of this were not bad enough, these workers were also subjected to some highly unpleasant workplace conditions. For the most part the factories of the needle trades were located in buildings that had originally been built as warehouses.[11] Thus, very few of these factories were well suited to the needs of manufacturing: ventilation was poor; lighting was limited to a set of windows on one side of the building and bare incandescent bulbs hung over work areas; the work area was crowded with bales of fabric, making movement difficult; and washroom facilities (depending upon what floor of the warehouse one worked on there might not be any) were often inadequate and quite unsanitary.[12]

This list could go on, but even these few items suggest some of the disadvantages of working in such surroundings. Compounding the problems raised by such conditions were the effects of the nervous strain borne by women who worked on piece-rates in the men's garment industry. Determined to make a liveable wage on extremely low rates, these women would forgo their lunch break, preferring to eat at their work station so as to return to work as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, this tactic, even when combined with working at a killing pace and taking extra work home, did not always produce a larger pay envelope, for employers could, and did, arbitrarily reduce the piece-rate when a woman was found to be earning too much.[13]

For the workers in the ladies' garment trade who worked on a time-rate, conditions were not much better. If they showed up even one minute late for work they would be docked for fifteen to thirty minutes worth of wages.[14] Many employers also had their foreman or forelady keep track of the time spent in the washroom so as to prevent abuses of this "privilege."[15] As to work itself, anyone who fell behind in production or who did work that was substandard would be dismissed almost immediately. Of course, the definition of what was a proper level of production and what was substandard was left entirely to the discretion of the owners and managers.

Leaving work for the day did not necessarily mean that these young women had time to relax. In many cases money was so tight for these workers that they were forced to eschew the streetcars and walk the one to three miles that separated the warehouse district from their homes in the north end of Winnipeg.[16] And the term "home" must be construed rather broadly for, as often as

not, the homes that these young women returned to were little more than the two or three rooms that their family rented in someone else's house.[17] It was not uncommon for six or seven family members to be crowded into two tiny rooms, for nothing better could be afforded when the only members of the family able to secure work on a regular basis were the mother and eldest daughters.[18]

This sort of situation was not universal, for there were male heads of households who had jobs. Unfortunately, given the simple fact that Manitoba recorded an absolute decrease of 14,760 male wage earners between 1931 and 1936, and an absolute increase of 370 women wage earners during the same time period, it is safe to assume that women came to be the only wage earners in many working-class homes during the period.[19] Individual testimony backs this supposition, indicating, on at least an impressionistic basis, that many single and married women supported or contributed substantially to the support of the family unit. In many cases these women simply turned their entire pay envelope over to their parents or husbands and received a small allowance for necessities in exchange.[20]

This then is at least a partial description of the situation that the women of Winnipeg's needle trade had to contend with during the 1930s. Before exploring their responses to this situation, however, some mention should be made of their male co-workers.

Naturally, the men of the garment factories shared much of the misery that these factories helped to create. However, they were much better paid than their female co-workers, for it was men who held the higher paying, "skilled jobs" of cutter, presser, blocker (in cap factories) and special machine operator.[21] Even those men who performed the same jobs as women earned considerably more than the women because, owing to a strange twist of logic, the owners, unions, and society at large all seemed to agree that men needed a higher wage than women in order to support families.[22] This logic not only reflected the widespread belief that men were, or should be, the sole supporters of the family unit, but it also provided the rationale for paying women less. It also explains why employers hired fewer males than females during the 1930s. Simply put, it saved them money. (It is indeed the supreme irony that the very belief that men deserved a higher wage to support a family increased the probability that women would become more likely to have the only employment in the family unit!)

As previously mentioned, one of the most dramatic responses to the dreadful conditions in the needle trades was a series of strikes undertaken during the early 1930s. These strikes were

not led by the United Garment Workers (UGW), the union that had organised most of Winnipeg's garment workers during the 1920s. This union had proved itself incapable of doing anything but negotiating wage cuts for its members between 1929 and 1932 and, as a consequence, died a slow and painful death during that period.[23]

The very failure of the conservative UGW to protect the workers did, however, help to pave the way for the emergence of the more dynamic and radical Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers (IUNTW). The workers, both male and female, were tired of the quiet machinations of UGW negotiators who swept in from Chicago, readily agreed to wage cuts, and then had the audacity to ask for an increase in union dues.[24] Because of their frustration with old-line unions, and the steady erosion of their income, these workers provided a most receptive audience for the militant and optimistic message of IUNTW organisers.

Originally formed by Communist party members who had been expelled from the UGW and International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in eastern Canada during the late 1920s, the IUNTW was always ready for a fight.[25] In essence, the IUNTW and its parent body, the Workers Unity League (WUL), combined the traditional demands of unions for higher wages, improved working conditions and union recognition with a well-developed critique of the abuses of capitalist society. Such a combination could not fail to attract many of the workers of the needle trades who had felt first-hand the often cruel effects of industrial capitalism.

This is not to say that the people who joined the IUNTW were all as radical as this union's leadership. They could see, though, that their own particular circumstances demanded a new form of industrial action, and that is what the IUNTW and the WUL offered. Unlike the UGW this union sought to break down the barriers of craft unionism which had separated skilled from unskilled workers. Beyond this, the IUNTW was willing to organise not just the workers of the men's clothing industry but also the previously unorganised workers of the ladies' cloakwear industry and virtually every other type of shop where people used a needle to make a living.[26] Finally, the IUNTW was willing to take on any employer, staff any picket line and draw upon its ties with the Union of Unemployed Workers to prevent scabbing and enforce picket lines at the various shops that it struck.[27]

All of these qualities, as well as the IUNTW's willingness to organise women and propel them to positions of authority, brought this union to the forefront of every struggle in the needle trades between 1931 and 1935. Unfortunately, for all of its activity, the

Convention of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers, 1930s. Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada/Collection: Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

IUNTW could claim very few victories of any lasting value. Employers would sometimes back down in the middle of a strike and agree to many of the union's demands but, as soon as the strike had ended, the agreement would be disregarded on the grounds that the union was dominated by Communists who did not represent the majority of the workers.[28] Thus, the gains made by the IUNTW between 1931 and 1935 tended to be more spiritual than practical. People like national leader Annie Buller had undeniably heightened the workers' sense of solidarity and trained many workers in the tactics of industrial conflict and organisation, both of which would be useful in the years to come. But the IUNTW had not been able to secure any of the immediate economic gains that its members needed so badly.

Whether or not this situation could have been changed after 1935 will never be known, for during 1935 and 1936 the Communist activists who had provided leadership to the IUNTW and the WUL were told to dissolve their organisations and work within traditional unions such as the UGW and the ILGWU. This new policy, in keeping with the United Front tactics being espoused by the Communist International, ended the experiment in industrial unionism entered into by the WUL unions before its final effectiveness could be judged.[29] However, the impact of local Communists like Louis and Bertha Guberman on the needle trades union movement was far from over.

In the short term, however, the more conservative forces of craft unionism were once again felt in Winnipeg's needle trades. The UGW local 35, which had been alive in name only since 1932, was revived in 1935 when most of IUNTW's membership was transferred to it.[30] At roughly the same time the ILGWU made its presence felt under the highly unorthodox rule of organiser Sam Herbst.

International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) group. Collection: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada/Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Herbst came to Winnipeg only one year after another ILGWU organiser had failed quite miserably to make any headway for that union in Winnipeg. Luckily for Herbst, however, by the time he came to the city the IUNTW was closing itself down, which left the field of the ladies' garment trade wide open for organisation. But what really gave Herbst the edge in creating a large local of the ILGWU was his willingness to employ a unique strategem. Before he had even attempted to sign up a majority of the workers Herbst went to the owners of the factories and convinced them that it would be in their interest to have his union organise their shops. In essence, Herbst promised them that an industry-wide contract would save them all from the vicissitudes of undue competition and strikes — Robert Michels and Max Weber could not have put it any better than Herbst did![31]

This unique approach to organising paid off magnificently for Herbst, who succeeded in attaining his industry-wide contract. He came to the workers and convinced them that he had been able to "hammer" out an agreement with previously anti-union

ILGWU signing contract, c. 1936. Collection: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada/Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

owners like Ben Jacob.[32] Not surprisingly the workers signed up in droves — although some had to be told by their employers that they were now union members.[33] And the employers could not have been happier, for Herbst was a man of his word and for the next twenty-five years of his rule, despite the continuation of many dreadful conditions, there were no strikes in the women's garment trade in Winnipeg.

In the men's garment industry the signing of an agreement was not quite as smooth a process. The UGW was thought to be quite radical because of its link with the veterans of the IUNTW and, for this reason, the owners did not want to deal with the UGW. Indeed, the UGW was forced to call a general strike of the men's garment trade in May 1936 before an industry-wide contract was signed on 7 August 1936.[34]

Without meaning to slight either the UGW or the ILGWU it must be said that during the last few years of the Depression neither union seemed able to protect its members. The ILGWU in particular seemed far too willing to take the owners' side in disputes.

In one sense, however, the lot of the workers did improve for there were now ways of confronting the owners with flagrant violations of the piece-rate agreement or minimum wage laws without the individual worker having to do it herself. Beyond this, beginning in 1936 the trade itself began to enter a period of prosperity as the market began expanding again. Thus, layoffs were of

ULGWU Executive, 1937. Collection: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada/Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

shorter duration and more shops began to open up, which actually brought on some competition for experienced workers. This in turn made it more likely that owners would try to keep their workers happy by abiding by the overtime provisions of the contract and paying the proper piece-rates.[35]

With the outbreak of World War II employment prospects became even greater and layoffs became almost nonexistent. Sadly though, neither of the two major unions had negotiated substantially higher wages so the higher take-home pay of the workers reflected their increased hours of work more than anything else. In fact, the war years were not particularly good ones for the workers in any way save the higher take-home pay. Crowding in the shops became worse than ever as manufacturers hired more and more women to fill wartime orders. The hours of labour went up as overtime work became an almost daily occurrence. Increased rates of production became commonplace and, as the perfect cap to all of this, Sam Herbst actually negotiated a deal with the manufacturers which took his members off the time-rate and put them on piece-rates.[36]

In the short term this agreement did help to increase the wages of the workers by getting around the government's wartime wage freeze. Unfortunately, it also subjected the workers to the many abuses of piece-rate work and increased rates of production while simultaneously locking them into that particular form of payment for the foreseeable future.[37]

The men's garment workers did not fare much better during the war. They too increased their wages largely through longer hours of labour and higher levels of production. As for the role of the union in protecting and serving its members little that is positive can be said.

Prior to the war Louis Guberman, the UGW business agent in Winnipeg, had led several wildcat strikes to enforce the piece-rate agreements that the union had negotiated, and by all accounts he was successful in policing this agreement. Unfortunately, despite his popularity with the rank and file membership, his radicalism was too much for the conservative International Executive and they had him removed from this position in 1940. From that time until 1943-44 the UGW became less active in enforcing existing agreements and became more distanced from the membership.[38] As a consequence, when the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) affiliated Amalgamated Clothing Workers launched an organising drive in Winnipeg in 1943 it was able to take over almost the entire membership of the UGW in less than a year. Indeed, many women who were relatively new to the trade did not even know that they were in a union until Amalgamated organisers approached them to switch unions — a fact which does not speak well for the UGW's level of contact with its members. In any event, by 1944, Amalgamated had totally eclipsed the UGW which, for the second time in its history, became a virtually defunct body in Winnipeg.[39]

This then was the union record in the two major divisions of the needle trades until 1944-45. To be sure, the women who worked in the trade were receiving higher wages than before. In many cases they were earning over eighteen dollars per week during the war, which was a vast improvement over the early days of the Depression.[40] The unions, however, could take little credit for these gains as they were more closely related to market forces than to bargaining activity. Sam Herbst, the close friend of many of the factory owners, was always willing to take what little he could get for his workers without putting up a fight.[41] The UGW was somewhat better during the late 1930s because of the dynamic leadership of Louis Guberman and because of its more democratic practises. Whereas Herbst ran his union local with an iron hand and actively discouraged rank and file involvement in bargaining, the UGW local under Guberman was more open. More importantly, the UGW local utilised the talents of its female members on the Executive and Bargaining committees. Women such as Sara Watson, Ms. Samson, Adeline Pue and many others at the shop floor level represented the interests of the large female

work force much more fully than could their sisters in the totally male-dominated ILGWU. Once again, however, the international office of the UGW found that the radicalism of these women was unacceptable and they, like Guberman, were forced out of positions of authority in the early 1940s.[42]

Aside from wages there had been few concrete gains made during the 1930s and 1940s. Certainly Herbst's agreement with the manufacturers to switch from time to piece-work could hardly be heralded as a giant step forward. Nor could the wartime introduction of increased rates of production and overcrowding be thought of as positive developments, for while both of these were related to higher levels of employment for women they brought in their wake more industrial accidents and more physical and nervous strain for the workers.[43] Regarding the introduction of more sophisticated methods for dividing labour into section work and quasi-assembly line work, the unions took no position at all, even though such changes would later have a dramatic impact on the trade.

Finally, as to the possibility of more women working in the higher paid positions of cutter or presser, the unions made no attempt to ensure equality of opportunity. Only the wartime shortage of male workers allowed women to break into these occupations that had long been reserved for men on the somewhat specious grounds that a certain degree of strength was needed to perform these tasks.[44]

In short, women had not been well served by their unions. Men still dominated the union hierarchies and they did not seem interested in fighting for equality for their union sisters. It is therefore not surprising that female operators had to abandon union solidarity in order to achieve wage parity with their male co-workers. Thus it was common practise — when the market was good — for operators to strike a private piece-rate with the boss or make arrangements to take extra work home at night in order to make a few more dollars.[45]

It is a sad comment upon the effectiveness of the unions that this sort of strategy was often the most effective way for women to survive. Because of their dire straits, many women in the needle trades had worked hard for unions such as the IUNTW, the UGW and the ILGWU. But, in the final analysis, the unions let them down. The most promising of the lot, the IUNTW, abandoned its membership just when it looked as if the years of struggle from 1930 to 1935 would finally be rewarded with success and, in so doing, left these women at the mercy of men like Sam Herbst.

The failure of Herbst and other male union leaders to fight for

better working conditions and equal wages forced these women to fall back on individual initiative in order to improve their standard of living. Thus they struck private deals with the owners, worked themselves at a frantic pace, made arrangements for family members to get jobs at the factory or, finally, took their labour elsewhere. There was, of course, one other alternative for those women who were married to someone who had a decent wage — quitting work. But this was not an option open to everyone and, in one sense, was no choice at all; for why should any woman have needed a husband just to escape from the conditions of her workplace? While this question may sound strangely ahistorical, it does seem amazing that in a trade where 60 percent to 80 percent of the workers were women, this question was never raised by the unions that represented them during the 1930s and 1940s.

This rather sad record of defeats and disappointments has one positive note to it. Simply put, the women of the needle trades never gave up their fight to achieve a decent standard of living. Despite incredible odds they fought to preserve themselves and their families during the worst depression in this country's history. That they lost so often is tragic, but their resilience and their willingness to struggle should be remembered. Perhaps in the future their failures will help to inform a truly collective movement of a new generation of needle trades workers — workers who like their predecessors, must still fight sexism, racism and high-handed employers.

Notes

1 These figures are derived from Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Men's Factory Clothing Industry and Clothing Contractors in Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931-1939) and Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Women's Factory Clothing Industries in Canada* (Ottawa: King's Printer: 1930-1939).

2 For a comparison of wage scales on an annual basis, see Asta Oddson, *Employment of Women in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Economic Survey Board, 1939), 57 and Appendix B.

3 Most of the wage scales cited in this paper are not in accord with officially published statistics. However, because these were the actual take-home wages cited by a number of veterans of the trade there is little reason to doubt that they are more accurate than those derived from reports of wages submitted by employers to the Government. See Manitoba Labour Education Centre, Needle Trades Project (MLEC/NTP) Interviews 1-3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 23 and 24.

4 Oddson, *Employment of Women in Manitoba*, 49 and Appendix B, Table I.

5 These were the strikes led by the Industrial Union of Needle-Trades Workers and Workers Unity League starting with the walkout of one hundred workers at Jacob and Crowleys in February of 1931. See, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 5-11 February 1931.

6 MLEC/NTP Interview 11. See also, *Labour Gazette* (March 1931) 280-81 for initial wage cuts and strikes.
7 Oddson, *Employment of Women in Manitoba*, Appendix B.
8 MLEC/NTP Interviews 3, 10, 11, 17, 23 and 24.
9 See Oddson, *Employment of Women in Manitoba*, 96-99 and MLEC/NTP Interview 3.
10 MLEC/NTP Interviews 11, 23 and 24.
11 Jimmy James, "The Winnipeg Clothing Industry," *Canadian Labour* (October 1958), 27.
12 MLEC/NTP Interviews 1-16 inclusive.
13 Ibid., Interviews 3, 23 and 24.
14 Ibid., Interview 10.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., Interview 11.
18 Ibid.
19 Oddson, *Employment of Women in Manitoba*, 43.
20 Ibid., 46 and MLEC/NTP Interviews 2, 3, 6 and 11.
21 Thelma A. Johnson, "The Needle Trades in Winnipeg" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1948).
22 Testimony as to the higher wages of men is scattered throughout the various interviews but on average men in the same job classification would earn from 33 percent to 50 percent more than a female counterpart. Cutters were the highest paid workers in the trade, followed (at some distance) by pressers, blockers and special machine operators. Cutters often set up their own shops and became employers themselves after a few years in the trade. See, for example, MLEC/NTP Interview 12.
23 MLEC/NTP Interview 11.
24 Ibid.
25 N. Hanrahan, "The IUNTW, 1930-35." Unpublished working paper prepared for the MLEC (August 1984).
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Most of the strikes ended when the workers could go on no longer. The few victories of the IUNTW were usually symbolic, as in the case of a strike called to protest the firing of a cutter. The IUNTW "won" the strike by getting a settlement which called for the rehiring of this cutter for a three-week period. See MLEC/NTP Interview 12.
29 While it is a moot point, the potential of the WUL seemed to be immense. The popularity of the IUNTW was quite high, as borne out by the frustrated report that Sam Kraaisman of the ILGWU gave to the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council after a failed organising drive in 1934. The industrial union might very well have been on the verge of being recognised by battle weary employers when Communist party policy demanded its dissolution.
30 Catherine Curtin, "The Trade Union Movement in Manitoba: the 1930's," unpublished paper (Winnipeg, 1974).
31 *Manitoba Commonwealth* (July 1935). See also MLEC/NTP Interview 18.
32 Jacob and Crowley had been involved in many of the strikes of the 1930s and the owners' anti-union sentiments were well known, so reaching an agreement with them was viewed as an impressive achievement by many workers.

33 MLEC/NTP Interviews 9, 12. See also, *Manitoba Commonwealth* (October 1935).
34 *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 August 1936.
35 The various contracts negotiated by ILGWU and UGW between 1935 and 1939 did not bring the wage level back up to its pre-Depression levels.
36 Donna Webber, "ILGWU History." Unpublished working paper prepared for the MLEC (August 1984).
37 The piece-rate remained in effect even after the wartime measures were relaxed.
38 MLEC/NTP Interview 25.
39 Johnson, "The Needle-Trades in Winnipeg," Chapter 7.
40 MLEC/NTP Interviews 3, 8.
41 Ibid., Interviews 10, 17 and 25.
42 Ibid., Interview 25.
43 Ibid., Interviews 10, 14 and 23.
44 This rationale is quite strange given the predominance of Slavic women in the trade, some of whom had not been too weak to do the ploughing, haying and land clearing on family farms.
45 MLEC/NTP Interview 14.

Women in the Winnipeg Garment Industry, 1950s-1970s

Annalee Lepp, David Millar and Barbara Roberts

"When I sit down to my machine, I want to make a decent living," Mrs. Conner told the Swan Commission in 1957. She was one of several Winnipeg garment workers who testified at a provincial inquiry, held to investigate newspaper reports of an impending walkout in the Winnipeg garment shops. The Winnipeg garment industry in the 1950s was based on the work of women, 80 percent of the labour force, most of whom put in double days of low-paid work in the factories and unpaid work at home. Most were immigrants, most were married.[1] Their working conditions were mediocre, in surroundings ranging from attractive to dangerous. Not surprisingly, the industry was to have serious labour shortages. Despite manufacturers' hopes that the trend from cheap workwear to "fashion" lines would attract employees, young Canadians did not want the jobs, or did not stay long in them. Almost all were on piece-rates, introduced in 1937 by business agent Sam Herbst of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Three international unions divided the industry between them; there was one Garment Manufacturers' association, representing the big union shops. Facing competition from imported garments, some were introducing assembly-line methods and "efficiency" experts. Labour militancy was low; there was no strike between 1937 and 1981.

Mrs. Conner spoke at a turning point in capital, labour and wage trends over the last half-century. The slump of 1957 appears to have been the beginning of a new era in which traditional craft skills, and sweatshops, were gradually replaced by assembly lines in large new "superfirms" (reported in the 1970s to have ten times the average capital investment and three times the average payroll: see Figure 1).[2] Government aid was crucial to this process. The manufacturers' lobby (known since 1970 as the Fashion Institute) likes to speak of this change as "modernisation," "productivity" and "job creation."[3] It looks different from the workers' point of view. Employment statistics (Figure 2) suggest that there have been four postwar crises, marked by major layoffs starting in 1957, 1966, 1974, and 1979. The workers, not the employers, bore the brunt of falling markets. Many were thus driven out of

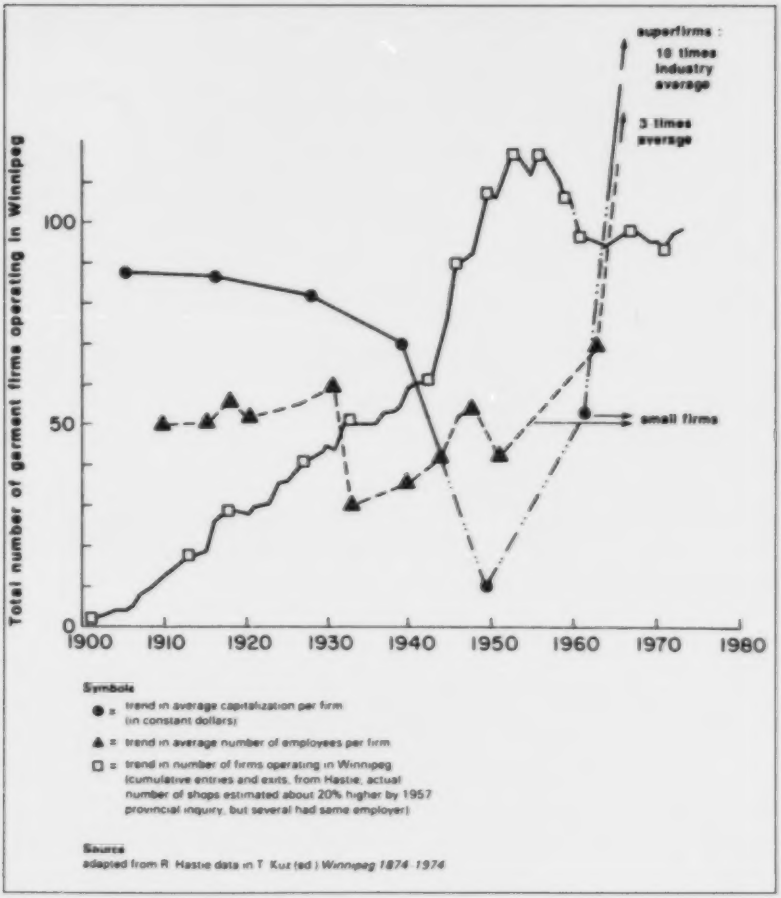
superfirms :
10 times industry average
3 times average
small firms
Total number of garment firms operating in Winnipeg
100
50
0
1900
1910
1920
1930
1940
1950
1960
1970
1980
Symbols
● = trend in average capitalization per firm (in constant dollars)
▲ = trend in average number of employees per firm
□ = trend in number of firms operating in Winnipeg (cumulative entries and exits, from Hastie; actual number of shops estimated about 20% higher by 1957 provincial inquiry, but several had same employer)
Source
adapted from R. Hastie data in T. Kuz (ed.) Winnipeg 1874 1974

Figure 1. Winnipeg Garment Manufacturers

the industry. But as each crisis passed, the manufacturers cried that a shortage of "experienced" workers was crippling the industry, and called on the government to bring in immigrants.[4] It did so. Thus the grateful taxpayer has to a large extent funded the flooding of this labour market, and the perpetuation of female job ghettos with low-paying, dead-end jobs.

The average earnings of Winnipeg garment workers in the last fifty years (Figure 3) show two major trends. The first is the widening gap between higher-paid males, who dominate such crafts as cutting, pressing and finishing, and lower-paid females. The term

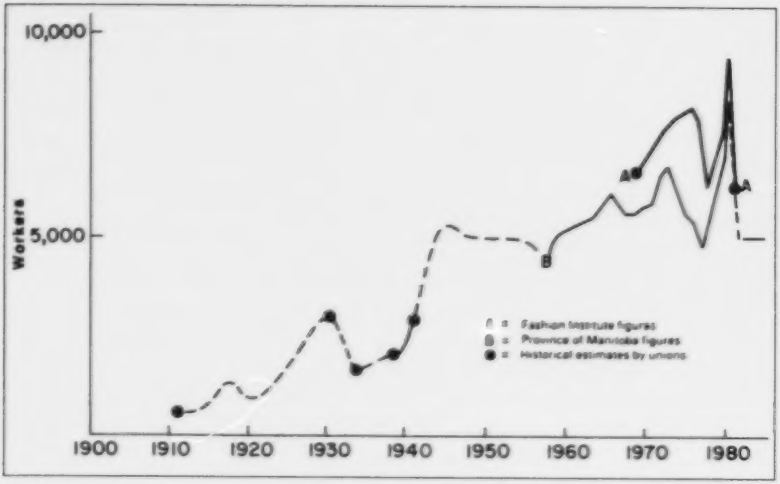

Figure 2. Number Employed, Winnipeg Garment Industry

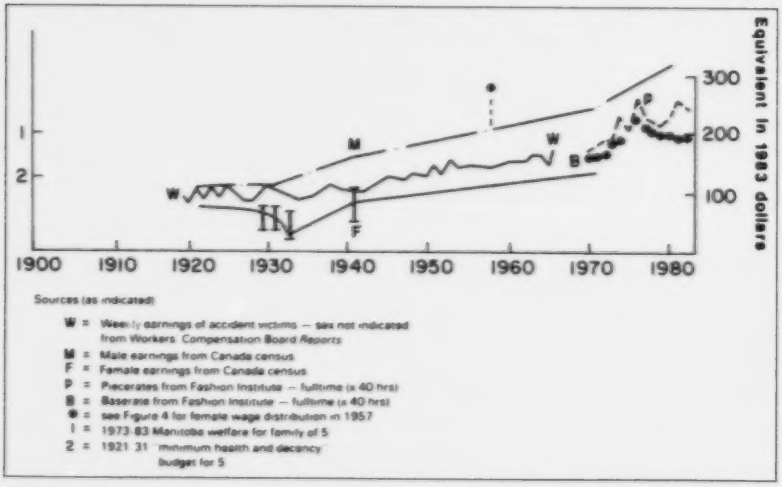

Figure 3. Average Weekly Earnings of Winnipeg Garment Workers (constant dollars)

"unskilled" is usually a misnomer. Women performing the same job as men were paid less; immigrants and those reentering the job market, despite years of experience, were paid as beginners. The second trend is that until the 1960s the majority of women were held below "minimum health and decency standards" (level

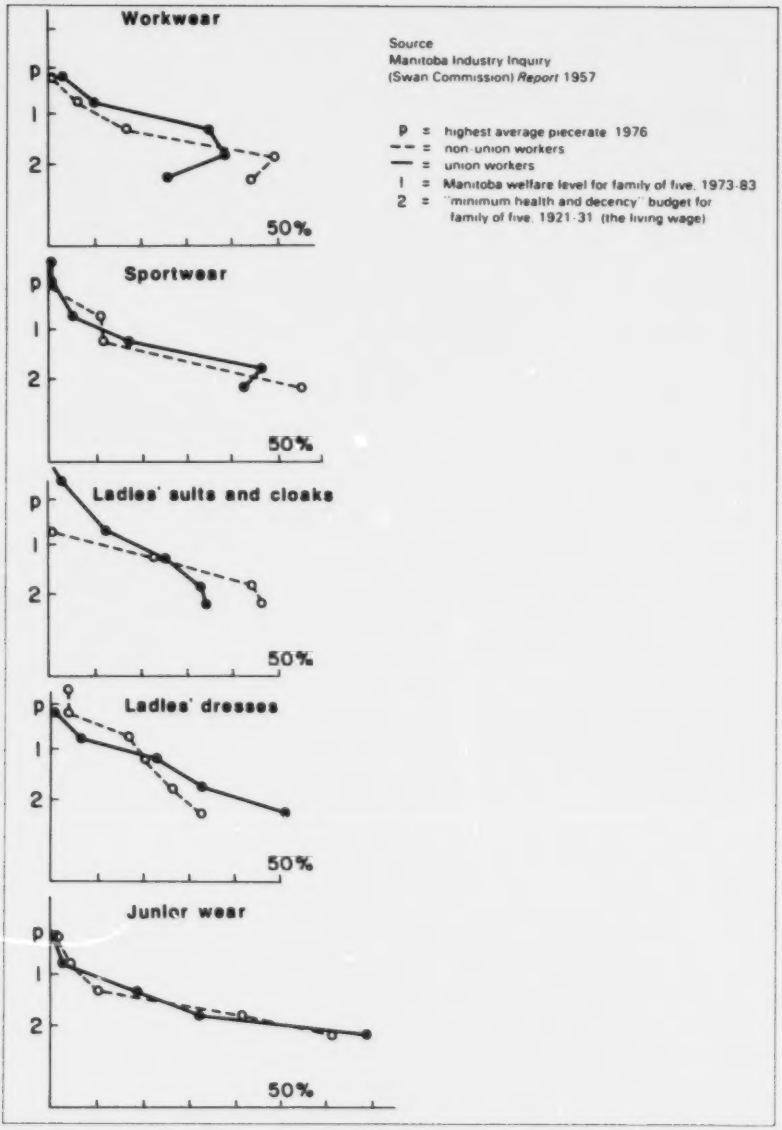

Figure 4. 1957: Women's Weekly Earnings in the Winnipeg Garment Industry.

2 in Figure 3: also known as the "living wage"). In the 1970s average wages rose above welfare levels, but the coincidence of mass layoffs with a rise in piece-work (P) and base-rate (B) averages suggests that this was achieved mainly by sacrificing several thousand jobs. As the work force shrank to a core of skilled workers, the average would rise. Another reason is that the rising provincial minimum wage may have set a floor below which wages could not fall.

The Swan Commission's exhaustive earnings data (Figure 4), though carefully downpedalled in its report, give credence to the charge that conditions were being undercut even in the best sectors of the industry. In 1957 fewer than 25 percent of garment workers earned as much as a 1970s family on welfare (level 1 in Figures 3 and 4). Unionists' earnings were higher than those of non-union workers only in workwear, sportswear, ladies' suits and cloaks. Even there, 30 percent to 50 percent earned less than a living wage (level 2). In two sectors where the ILGWU predominated, ladies' dresses and junior wear, the union workers were actually worse off than the non-union ones. Here fewer than 10 percent had earnings above 1970s welfare; a majority of the organised workers earned less than the living wage (level 2). As in the industry today, Swan found that 80 percent of workers were female, 60 percent married, and 60 percent were immigrants who did not speak English well. There had been decades of such low wages. The union pensions were tiny. There were "many women 70 years old who don't want to quit."[5]

One of them, Mrs. Hill, had been working on power machines for fifty-one years. (But as she said, "because I am an old lady does not mean I am slow.") She was angry at the low rates the workers got, and angry at the union for not doing more to help: "that is half our trouble." When the business agents came to the plant,

> the bosses soften them up with a few laughs or pats and they go away and we do not see them anymore. . . . I think if it was not for the union we would be tramped under completely; but when the union men do come, they seem to be absolutely helpless to do anything for us, and the boss sits pat and says he is not changing the prices.[6]

Another woman testified that when employers bid too cheaply on an order and faced a loss, they took it out of workers' pay. In one case wages fell from one dollar to fifty-eight cents per hour, she told Swan.[7] Despite low wages, decrepit facilities and other hazards of the Winnipeg garment shops of the 1950s, today's "lifers" (as one labelled herself) recall pride of craft, close friendships with fellow workers, and sometimes with bosses. But

workers at that time complained that their earnings were constantly chiseled down by new rates, transfers to new operations, and increased rates of production; that job ads were misleading or false; that employees were told to start early or work late "voluntarily."[8] Many of the small plants were unsanitary firetraps, with suffocating heat in summer — sweatshops — as they remain today. Swan also reported what we would call "runaway shops." Many "former employees" laid off after World War II, rural women who had "married and returned to their home towns" were being hired in plants outside Winnipeg.[9] Low rural wages and non-union labour attracted investment, a process that would accelerate with Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE) grants in the mid-1960s. After that time, city garment manufacturers found few Canadian-born workers willing to accept their conditions.

Juuka was one of the immigrants on whom this low-wage industry depended. She started work as a teenager in 1957.

> We had lots of hardships. We had no money. I think my dad had eighty dollars in his pocket when we came and that was to feed a family of seven. . . .
>
> [When] I was fourteen. . . my mother had a little hand sewing machine. I made all my own clothes . . . I never bought anything new. We just couldn't afford it. I always wanted to be a stewardess. I thought it was a great job. But you needed a grade twelve education. I only had ten so that left me right out.
>
> And so that was the reason why at that time immigrants went to sewing factories. Because all the girls that work there are immigrants — Italians, Germans, Polish and Ukrainians.
>
> Most of them are older than I am.*

She went to work to support the family. In the sewing room at St. Boniface Hospital, her wages "left a lot to be desired." A year later she took a similar job at Pentar Pants. With another year's experience, she got a finisher's job at Tan Jay. She stayed there until 1975, when her (male) supervisor became so unbearable that she quit. A skilled worker, she was immediately hired by National Sportswear.

She has been in the industry for twenty-seven years. Like so many of the immigrants then and later, she expected to work hard for low pay — but did not expect to find barriers to promotion. Like most of them, she sees her problems not as systemic bias against her class and sex, but against her language and ethnicity.

Francine, one of the minority of Canadian-born workers in the industry, was born in a small Franco-Manitoban community near Winnipeg. Her family was poor; when she was still in school they

moved into Winnipeg. Like Juuka, she had to go to work. At the age of fifteen, Francine got her first job at Gaspard and Sons, a small garment factory of a type now unusual in Winnipeg. As a sewing machine operator and presser, she was able to learn "about running every machine."

> I was making seventy-five cents an hour [in 1953]. There was only about 15 people working in that factory. It was like a little family, it was nice. . . . Half the people that I left there thirty years ago are still there. . . .

With her acquired skills, Francine got a better job at a dry cleaner's as a presser. In the 1960s she quit to raise a family but returned to the industry ten years later. Francine speaks nostalgically of the past, preferring Gaspard's "little family" where the boss, the supervisors and the workers had related on an amiable and personal level, to her present-day working conditions at Tan Jay.

When Juuka and Francine started work in the 1950s, there was an obvious gap between a small group of skilled women (level P in Figure 4) at one dollar per hour and the low-paid "sewing operators" and "beginners" at fifty-eight cents hourly. Still larger was the traditional gap between males and females (M and F in Figure 3).

Neither wage gap has been eradicated (see Figure 5). In 1957 Mrs. Conner earned only eighty-five cents an hour despite her twenty-seven years of experience in the industry, and she was in the top 20 percent. In constant dollars this was about twice women's earnings in 1933, the worst year of the Depression, but her pay was still within the Depression range as shown in the 1941 Census. For at least four decades the industry continued to pay substandard wages not only to Mrs. Conner, but to other "beginners" whose stories we have heard: Juuka in 1959, Paula in 1973, Francine in 1953 and 1978, Koreans and refugees from Vietnam in 1982, reported by Luz.

The "beginner" and "unskilled" categories are often convenient fictions, an excuse to pay low wages and receive government aid. Only a tiny minority of "lifers" like Juuka and Francine were able to work their way well above the base-rate (B). Piece-work averages (P in Figure 3) show that most "skilled" women workers earn little more than the base-rate. There has been some pay improvement for these women since Mrs. Conner's time, at the cost of speed-ups, deskilling, and mass layoffs. It is hard for them to remain in the industry. And if they do, as Francine and Juuka

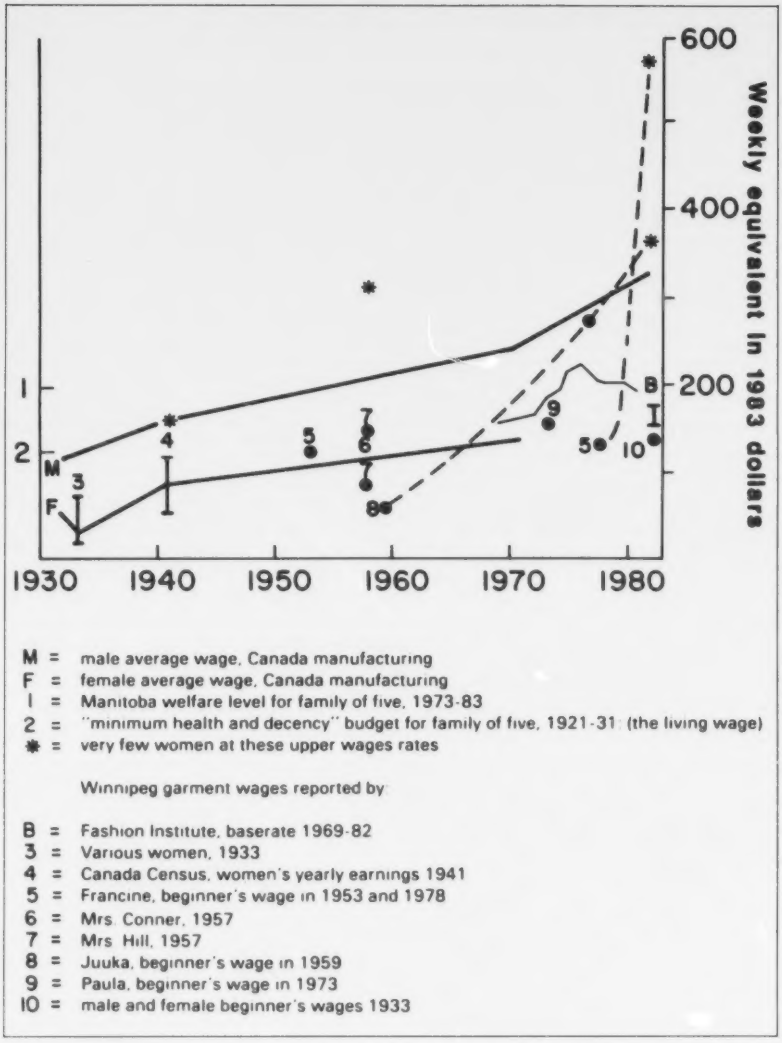
600
400
200
Weekly equivalent in 1983 dollars
1930
1940
1950
1960
1970
1980
M = male average wage, Canada manufacturing
F = female average wage, Canada manufacturing
1 = Manitoba welfare level for family of five, 1973-83
2 = "minimum health and decency" budget for family of five, 1921-31 (the living wage)
* = very few women at these upper wages rates
Winnipeg garment wages reported by:
B = Fashion Institute, baserate 1969-82
3 = Various women, 1933
4 = Canada Census, women's yearly earnings 1941
5 = Francine, beginner's wage in 1953 and 1978
6 = Mrs. Conner, 1957
7 = Mrs. Hill, 1957
8 = Juuka, beginner's wage in 1959
9 = Paula, beginner's wage in 1973
10 = male and female beginner's wages 1933

Figure 5. Wage Gaps. Winnipeg Garment Industry 1933-82.

show, the bosses find ways to reduce piece-work earnings. Clearly it has been to the bosses' advantage to flood the labour market at the low end, to recruit large numbers of immigrants, to discourage veteran workers and to dilute their skills by modernisation.

Throughout the 1960s, several government inquiries showed the industry to be in trouble.[10] Old family firms lacked trained managers. There were bankruptcies (see Figure 1). Fly-by-night shops and cutthroat competition drove down wages and conditions. Few Canadians were willing to work in the industry. Thus employers bewailed the labour "shortage." After 1966, a substantial proportion of labour would be directly recruited overseas, courtesy of Immigration Canada and the taxpayers: a not inconsiderable covert subsidy to the industry.

There was considerable contradiction between the forms of government aid. While direct overseas recruiting of new workers helped hold down the price of labour, DREE and the province's Development Fund tried to create jobs for unemployed Canadians by establishing branch plants outside Winnipeg.[11] These grants, combined with municipal bonusing, tax breaks, and low rural wages, were hard to resist: in the 1960s they changed the industry's attitude to government. Ralph King had been an industry consultant on one of the government studies. His firm (Canadian Garments, later called Gemini Fashions) opened a plant in Winkler in 1958. Half the investment came from silent partner Meyer Klapman (owner of Peerless and Superior coat companies). Soon they won grants for other plants, at the little town of Miami and the Indian reserve at Swan River.[12] They brought in tax specialist Gary Steiman as a third partner. Ottawa's tax writeoffs were becoming a major factor in the industry. In Miami, the town fathers raised eight thousand dollars in bonus money to repair the building they rented to the company for only ninety dollars a month. As one explained, "These things don't make a profit for the town. It just puts money on the main street on payday."[13] Ralph King, the "people motivator," revealed some other secrets of his success in a 1968 interview. He implied that bonuses for non-union labour could be even cheaper than piece-work in Winnipeg.

> This factory wouldn't work in the city. There, they have many ways of spending their money and reasons for wanting more. [In Winkler] parental influence is strong. . . . Everyone is on the incentive system here. If the sweeper asks for a raise, the girls all vote on it. If they say, "She has been really keeping the floors and bins clean," then she gets the raise. . . . Canadian Garment is the largest purchaser of nylon stockings in southern Manitoba. These along with watches, silver dollars and other useful items are distributed daily . . . bonus cheques every other week. The parents do not know of the bonus cheque.[14]

King posted the daily bonus in the plant. Every worker could see

who made extra money or "cost the company" in low production. For employees who "increase production by a certain percent" there was a Swing-with-King excursion to Hawaii after the fall rush. He also employed retarded children: "Once they'd been taught to do something, their work is superior in many ways."[15]

King omitted to mention to his *Free Press* interviewer that most of the workers were on government training allowances or wage supplements. A more critical analyst, Heather Robertson in 1972 found other bonuses. Residential taxes were "extremely high," business taxes "low" or waived altogether. In effect, workers were subsidising the company. Moreover,

> Anyone talking union is promptly fired . . . The town put up the money for the building . . . [and the 120 workers were] wives and mothers of men employed full or part-time in Winkler's other industries; by paying low wages, Winkler is able to expand its industrial base because more people are forced to go to work. The garment factory is a tough place. The work is hard and the discipline stern. The turnover is 90 percent. . . . The high turnover works to Mr. King's advantage, because it enables him to take advantage of government-subsidized training programs.

She quotes King as saying bluntly,

> I'm looking for a girl who needs money. I don't want women with kids under six, and they can't be more than twenty pounds underweight.[16]

In other words: strong backs, low wages. No others need apply.

In 1966-70 Meyer Klapman (of Peerless, Superior and Gemini) became the industry's chief recruiter.[17] The provincial Conservatives appointed him the official "agent" of Manitoba. He made three trips to Italy, and three to the Philippines, bringing in seven hundred workers. Most were single women. All were skilled. They accepted jobs (and wages) that most Canadians refused.

Nineteen-year old Jan was one of the first 114 Filipinos directly recruited overseas. She arrived in Winnipeg on 1 October 1968. The oldest child, she had been working since the age of fifteen to help her family. Though they could not be sure if the offer was genuine, the Canadian government and the Fashion Institute promised air fare and cash allowances, a guaranteed job, the hope for a better future, and higher wages.

> I was making two dollars a week . . . I said "I don't know if it's true or not, I just get my chance here." My parents said they don't like it. They said I have to go back if I don't like it. But I told them I don't spend my money, it's the government that spend the money.

So there's nothing to lose. . . .

It's the government that recruit us from the Philippines and we're the first batch that came here. Those factory owners, they went to the Philippines and they said they wanted some girls that know how to sew like this and like that. And that spread through the factories, every factory, contacted the labour there and take some application. . .

The first day . . . here they got the apartment for us and some money for those things that we don't have like coat. We came in October and it's really cold, chilly. So we got those things. And our airplane ticket was free and everything is ready for us.

I just came myself. I didn't have anybody here; no family or friends [she shared three bedrooms with seven other recruits]. I was nineteen years old, single. . . . I knew English when I came here so I didn't have to learn language. . . . We got lots of friends, like German friends from the workers. They're good to us. We got that organisation, Philippine Canadian organisation. . . . The first year when we came here, they took care of us. The man from Immigration took care of us. And everything goes fine. No problems. At first homesick, scared . . . .

She worked for two years at Olympic Sportswear before leaving for a better-paid job at a biscuit factory.

By contrast, consider the experiences of Francine, a typical local recruit of the same period. When Francine took paid work again, with several years of previous experience, she was a "skilled" worker. That was worth only ten cents more than base-rate as a presser at Tan Jay's Adelaide plant.

I had no education, no nothing, no training in anything else. . . $1.75 was the minimum wage then, and I started at $1.85 because I had experience.

And then I made piece-work. The second pay cheque I had piece-work. I never worked for my hour rate. Now [in the spring of 1982] I'm one of the highest paid there — $12.67 an hour. I've worked there for over ten years. I'm a presser, a hand presser. I press with an iron. I press pants, skirts, blouses, jackets — everything they make.

There were problems in attracting and holding local recruits. By 1972, the Fashion Institute was training Canadians in its own school, where wages (thanks to its lobbying in Ottawa) were 60 percent subsidised by Manpower. However, there was a very high dropout rate among the trainees according to the institute's own statistics released in 1974: 173 percent in the first six weeks, 67 percent in the next six, 48 percent overall, even though trainee earnings of $118 weekly were 50 percent above the industry base-rate.[16] The trainees would actually earn less when they were put on piece-work.

After 1978, at least 26 percent of the three thousand workers

added to the industry were overseas recruits (but by 1983 they would be laid off or working short time).[19] In an unguarded moment, Fashion Institute president Gary Steiman admitted that the industry hired "extremely well-qualified" Manitobans — "anybody who has been here more than an hour."[20]

Francine's reactions to the new immigrants reveal a mixture of racism and sympathy:

> I figured, cheap wages eh? Here comes some more! Well, I feel that if [the manufacturers] would have paid a decent wage they would have had all the help right from here. The only reason to go out there [overseas] is to pay cheap wages. . . . I didn't think it was a threat to my job but I think it was a threat to my pay. You were fighting like crazy to get your price and when they came in, I think they would have worked for anything, nothing. You were fighting like crazy to get two dollars an hour when it was $1.75 and they would have been satisfied working for a buck. . . . Some of them are six or eight girls living in one-room apartments and they sleep at different times, they all work different times . . . save on rent, save on food (all they eat is rice anyway) and then they go back home and they're rich. . . .

The immigrant dream is to work hard and move up. But often it does not work out that way. In fact, the constant influx of cheap labour, combined with deskilling, tends to undermine the position of senior workers. Even Juuka, with twenty-seven years of experience, feels threatened, although she can sympathise.

> Before that, you could say that you didn't like it, "I'll leave," and they would say, "Oh no, don't leave whatever you do." Later on you would say, "If I don't get it, I'll leave" and they would say, "There's the door." You see, that's the difference because they knew there's other people they could hire just like that. And they were going to the Philippines and getting a lot.
>
> I'll tell you, the Filipino group, they're very nice girls. It's not anymore like when they first started to come. Then they really stuck together and they didn't socialise whatsoever. They got away with a lot more than we ever did. At that time, I wasn't that involved with them. I'm much more involved with them now than I was at that time but I'm sure they must have had problems adjusting to the country. The weather alone already — I mean, those poor kids, they would freeze to death. . . .There's quite a few Vietnamese that came: twenty to twenty-five. Now it's the Vietnamese and the Chinese, because them too, they stick together, they don't socialise with anybody. It takes awhile. . . . When the Filipinos came, they were subsidised by the government to start off with. The company only paid so much and the government would subsidise them. And the company had to keep them for a year.

> And then Nygard [the Tan Jay boss] started branching out and he started getting factories in . . . Hong Kong. He's getting a lot of work done there: cheap labour.

In the 1970s it was easy to get jobs in the industry, and thousands of immigrant women did so. This was not just a matter of market forces and individual choice but of government action. Direct and indirect recruiting, aided by the Department of Employment and Immigration, assured the garment industry of a steady supply of cheap female immigrant labour.

Thousands of immigrants were still hired overseas: a substantial direct subsidy which the government occasionally tried to cut when unemployment rose at home. But the manufacturers successfully fought back with political and economic lobbying, even threatening to move the industry out of the country. But there were indirect recruits as well — thousands of immigrant women coming to Winnipeg with their families, who were channelled into dead-end jobs in the industry by Manpower (later Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission) rules that discriminated against women. Manpower training regulations (as they were interpreted in Winnipeg) refused subsidised language or training courses to any immigrant who could get a job without them.[21] Because immigrant women could always get a low-paid cleaning or garment industry job in Winnipeg, they were pushed by Manpower counsellors and immigration officials to do just that.[22] Once in the industry, most of them were kept there by language difficulty, exhaustion from the double day, lack of money, discouragement, and systemic discrimination.[23]

One indirect recruit was Luz, a Portuguese schoolteacher who came to visit her parents, and then became a sponsored immigrant. Despite her qualifications, she was streamed into garment work.

> It was up to your sponsor to provide for all your different needs be it financial, emotional and actual training needs. Unfortunately it was extremely difficult unless the person knew enough as to what was going on. . . . I was never even informed of the International Centre [free language classes].
>
> When I came here I had to work during the evening. I got a job from 5:00 to 11:00 P.M. Monday to Friday, in order to be able to go to Red River College and take English courses during the day.
>
> [I operated the machine that put on] the hooks for pants and skirts. It was quite pressuring because one supervisor there was after production. For a while it was all right because the other supervisor knew me, she knew my sister-in-law and so on.
>
> She was also Portuguese. But then we had another one who came over from the daytime to check why I wasn't producing as much as the daytime girl. Every day she had that clock at my side testing

> me and seeing how much time I would take to do whatever. It was really nerve-wracking to have that clock continuously running at your side and to be measured or compared to an invisible person.

The Community College language classes did not give her the English-speaking context she needed so badly.

> Basically it's theory, you learn a lot of grammar. The conversation skills are very, very low. Even the lab classes were a waste of time. You didn't feel like staying there repeating what was on the tape because you knew it already, already had some English. [But outside the College] . . . you start talking to people, you don't have the confidence to express yourself. You are constantly aware of your own mistakes . . . you tend to talk the least possible.

After three months she dropped out.

> After I stopped my English classes I looked for a full-time job. I went back to Manpower. I asked them if they could put me in a training programme. They said no. The only thing they could suggest to me was getting a job in a factory. They would put me in an on-the-job training programme for sewing machine operators. Well, I think I needed the money and I took it. I was a sewing machine operator trainee at Silpit for a couple of months and then I was placed in a factory where I continued the training.
>
> [Even though I already had several months' experience] it was terrible. . . . I felt an incredible amount of pressure because every day your progress would be graphed on a graph they had on the wall and you would see the ups and downs, how slow you would be. . . . And at times, especially in the beginning, I cried and was ready to leave. . . .

But an allergy to chemicals in the cloth drove Luz out of the industry. She developed a chronic skin rash, as well as back problems. Both are common. In a way she was lucky; most workers have to go back to their dead-end jobs. At the hospital, she watched the gift shop cashier and thought "why can't I do that?" Eventually she did. At the same time, she was becoming involved in community service volunteer work in the immigrant community. Her English, her counselling skills and her confidence improved during the next few years. She landed a paid job in a women's employment counselling project that helps women take stock of their own skills and get access to services, training and other resources to find decently paid, satisfying jobs.

Those who did stay in the industry in the 1970s felt the impact of modernisation. The garment industry in Winnipeg has been attempting to increase productivity and profits for decades. "All of this is for the employer, what's best for the employer,"[24] said

cutter Gurdip Singh, looking back over his nine years in the industry. The Fashion Institute's productivity programme, funded by Federal Productivity Improvement Programme grants, would not improve jobs or open the way for promotion. Peter Nygard of Tan Jay explained the manufacturers have "tried to replace labour with equipment" because

> manual skills are too monotonous and are very hard to learn. We have tried to de-skill some of the jobs with machines so that the people do not have to undergo such lengthy training periods.[25]

Production is increased when the creative task of sewing a whole garment is subdivided into simple, monotonous steps. Each sewing machine operator is forced to repeat the same step, faster and faster. The pride of craft was undermined in the interests of quantity and speed, and the work force as a whole has become more expendable. The higher-paid workers are easily eliminated through layoffs to allow greater numbers of unskilled, lower-paid newcomers to enter the labour force. Francine watched this deskilling process take place:

> It's all split up. Nobody does the whole garment anymore . . . it's just a straight seam. Someone that doesn't have no experience can learn to sit down and sew a straight seam. And this is the way the whole production goes.

Francine regrets the loss of craft skills. Even medium-skilled Kumara, whose greatest pride is in fast piece-work and its higher pay, sees the new technology as "boring":

> you don't need any brains down there. Just your hands go like this. If you see me working you will see that I'm just working like a machine. I have six and a half minutes for ten pants, ten pair of pants. It means twenty pieces I have to hem in six and a half minutes . . . I finish them in four and a half. I save two minutes out of that and that's how I make my piece-work. . . . Five years doing the same job, that's how you get there. . . .
>
> Very mechanized. You just sit on your chair and do your job. You are not supposed to do anything else. But if you feel like it you can waste your time, if you can afford to, talking or going to the washroom.
>
> But we talk sometimes ten minutes while we are working and go to the washrooms and if sometimes someone is down there we will talk about anything we want to for five minutes. . . . [Back on the line] it's noisy but you just yell at them. Because you can't stay there on that mindless job — it's so boring, you have to talk about something else . . . otherwise you will go crazy.

"Before, you could work at your own speed," remembers Juuka. A skilled piece-worker with ten years at the company, she left Tan Jay because of the speed-up. It caught up with her six years later at National Sportswear:

> If all of a sudden they say, "you sit there and you do this" or "we're going to move you around to do this and that," it's hard for the girls to grasp the whole thing. Then there was the question of wages. They said, "Oh well, you don't have to worry, you're going to make the same wages as you're making now. Girls, you don't have to worry." That's the only thing they said. But when that system first came in, well, four, five, six girls were thirty dollars short a week, forty dollars short a week because they cut the prices and they couldn't make the extra average . . . that's when they started push, push, push; faster, faster, faster.
>
> They started what you call "putting on a line." They got this whole new rail system going. Two guys came from England and they started the line going. They really modernised the plant and they simplified the jobs. There is hardly *any* know-how to what the girl gets to do. They cut it down completely. Everything comes off a rail and leaves in buggies that go on the rails. So the girl gets, for instance, to do the side seam, the back seam and the other side seam and the shoulders. That's all she does. And then the next one gets to make the sleeves up and the next gets to put the pockets on and the next one gets to put the collar in and then the lining and that's it. They simplify it so much. You don't need no brains anymore. Before we did the whole thing, the whole garment.

Quantity replaced quality. Modernisation meant not only loss of craft pride and control over work speed, but greater isolation of workers, from each other and from management. With the new system came a new method of timing and pricing which even "lifers" like Juuka found incomprehensible. Its main function seems to have been to disguise the speed-up, to get a piece-worker to compete against herself to regain her "average": what she is paid if not on piece-work.

> Mine is eight dollars. But it's real funny. I haven't figured out how they time. They're supposed to time you according to your average, like what you work up to, and a certain percentage of what you earn. Now the base-rate is $4.60 or $4.95 and then you have the 100 percent which is six dollars, and then you have your average which you work up to. . . .
>
> So this guy comes and he times us. Myself and a few other girls and the one behind me, she works on the serger and she's really fast. So we got timed and the next day we got our sheet and she behind me was 78 percent — I mean 80 percent is only $4.95, 100 percent is $6.36 or whatever. She was 78 percent. I got my sheet and I says, "Oh, you're better than I am. I'm only 72 percent." So we really started laughing. And there was the girl behind me, she

said, "Oh, you're still lucky. I only go 64 percent."

Then we looked at the paper of two new Vietnamese girls that came in. Now if you would see them working, it's really a joke; as slow as anything and they were 110 percent. . . . They cannot explain it. I went after them time and time again. "How can you do it? Experienced girls!" I says, if you put that girl on my job she couldn't make half, not even one-third of what I'm making. Well, she would get timed higher.

She suspects it is a deliberate attempt to drive out the older, better-paid workers.

This system is great for the person with absolutely no experience. They give you a job and they let you stay there for a couple of days, then they time you and they give you a price. So after three or four weeks, you're bound to get better, you work up your speed. So you still keep that same price. So if you could make four dollars that first week, I can guarantee you say six weeks from now you could probably make six dollars. So that would be great. Anybody they get off the street, it's good.

To workers who had spent a decade or more in the industry, the triple blows of modernisation, deskilling and the speed-up were devastating. Some laugh. Others are in despair because they are unable to bargain up their rates:

They can't get mad and say, "Now you can go you-know-where if I don't get what I want." They just sit there and take it or they cry or whatever.

For instance, that time I was doing something and the guy was timing me and I was looking at it, he says, "You don't have to look at it." I says, "Yes. I worry if I don't do a good job." He says, "You don't get paid for worrying. That's not your job." I said, "Fine! I mean it's fine with me. I'll do anything you say but don't come back to me two days later and say I did a terrible job."

Now they're running into all sorts of troubles because they're pushing the girls so hard that now they've got thousands of garments back from the shop, from the stores because they just make them. Now they're starting to pay for what they did last year. And we've been telling them for a year already that this is going to run into trouble because no way the girls can keep that up. So now they're having problems, lots of problems. And I had to laugh. I said to him, that chap [efficiency expert] from England. I said, "Harry, how was the success rate in England with this kind of system?" He says, "Not bad. Not bad. A few of them went bankrupt." So I said, "At this rate we're going now, I'm sure we're going to get bankrupt too."

Despite the laughter of "lifers" like Juuka, the overall result is that skills are reduced to a minimum. Profits are made from the speed-up, and by keeping women in job ghettos from which very

few escape.[26] Most will eventually be replaced by newcomers, as Juuka herself realises:

> All the jobs are dead-end. They don't try to give you any opportunity. A sewer is a sewer is a sewer. She very rarely gets to do the spreading and learns to be a cutter. The cutters are the highest paid jobs, usually held by men. And the women don't get the opportunity to learn those jobs. . . .
>
> They don't want to retrain you to do anything else. When you confront management and ask them directly they say, "Of course we do [retrain]. That's so stupid. It would be an economic waste . . .," but the negotiating team says that's not true . . . "I'm a button sewer. I was there for two years and someone's been on the staff for a month learning to do button holes. She stayed on the job and I got laid off."

But the joke was on these workers, and they knew it. Modernisation has not eradicated a sex-typed job structure where the higher-paid, more secure cutting and pressing jobs are almost exclusively male-dominated and the low-paid, unstable sewing machine and finishing operations are predominantly held by women. Workers are well aware of this discrimination, not only in beginners' rates, but also in wages in general. To quote Luz:

> The union, we would say, is the organisation which has been made for the protection of the workers, but when it does not do it, then the Church has to try and push the organisation to do what they have to do. They should also press to improve the status of women. In almost all the factories, the men start at $3.50 or $4.00 but the women start at $3.15. If you are strong to do more production then you have the possibility to earn more, if not, forget it.
>
> There's lots of men in the cutting and the knitting operations. Their jobs are better paying. Two of our ladies they were in our cutting department and they cut the same thing as the guys did but the guys are paid more than the girls. That's what we call equal rights? The union is trying to do something [to get] equal rights and equal pay.
>
> The spreaders and the cutters are usually time-work jobs and not piece-work so they have less stress level on them. They're all pressured but those are the creamer jobs in the factory. . . .

The industry has alternated boasts of progress and screams of desperation over these three decades. Owners have blamed and blessed the government, foreign imports, local workers, consumers, the weather, and the unions. The garment industry in Winnipeg has not yet been rationalised to the same extent as that in other cities, either by capital or by labour. Even the superfirms, if badly managed, might see their market share decline. New entries and bankruptcies occurred in spite of soaring capital-intensive trends. With government assistance, the labour market

has been continually flooded to maintain a supply of cheap labour. Government grants for technological change have further threatened the position of skilled women. Weak unions have chosen "peaceful" relations with the companies, to the workers' cost. Until very recently, government action on labour standards and safety and health was feeble. Thus neither the periodic booms in the industry, union action nor government programmes have greatly improved working conditions for the majority of Winnipeg garment workers over the years.

Yet the industry grew significantly in productivity and profits, due largely to government handouts. To quote Tan Jay's Peter Nygard,

> Government and industry are in bed together all the time . . . so business must be keenly aware of who its bed partner will be.[37]

These government handouts have taken a number of forms: 1) direct grants for new technology, new plants, productivity; 2) forgiveable loans by the federal government (DREE, etc.) and the Manitoba Development Corporation; 3) wage subsidies, federal (Manpower and Indian Affairs) and provincial (i.e., on Indian reserves); 4) accelerated depreciation and other corporate tax shelters; 5) tax shelters for owners' and investors' private income; 6) import restrictions (clothing quotas); 7) import relaxations in fabrics and direct recruiting of immigrants; 8) Manpower (later Employment Canada) training programmes; 9) provincial vocational education programmes; 10) provincial hydroelectric rates, among the cheapest in Canada and until recently frozen for "job creation" purposes; 11) low municipal taxes, including "tax-free" years. Very little of these subsidies, from the public purse and therefore from the taxpayers' pockets, has trickled down to the workers. If unions or governments demand improved wages and conditions, the bosses threaten that the whole industry will run away. The old sweatshops have been replaced by modern deskilling and speed-ups. Women, who form the bulk of the work force, have gained little in real wages over the last thirty years. They are largely confined to the low-paid jobs, easily laid off, and easily replaced by new waves of immigrants.

The Winnipeg garment industry has been keenly aware of its bed partner, to its profit. The experiences of its women workers need to be studied within the context of the political economy which largely determines their lives. This will be a fruitful field for further quantitative, as well as qualitative, research.

Notes

* Unless otherwise noted, all interviews with workers are by the authors. Names have been changed to protect the informants.

1 For more details on this and later periods, see A. Lepp, D. Millar and B. Roberts with L. Runkel and A. Mendelsohn Zimmer, *Women in the Winnipeg Garment Industry* (forthcoming, New Hogtown Press). On the 1950s, see George Swan, *Report of the Industrial Inquiry Commission* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Department of Labour, 1957), 164 (Mrs. Conner's testimony), and 66, 68, 82-83 for general industry characteristics. Hereafter cited as Swan Report, there is a copy in the Manitoba Legislative Library.

For earlier working conditions, see L.G. Salverson, *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter* (1939; reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), chapters 8, 37, 40; I. Abella and D. Millar, eds., *The Canadian Worker in the 20th Century* (Toronto: Oxford, 1978), chapters 1 and 4; interviews by the "Winnipeg Past and Present" oral history project in the Manitoba Provincial Archives; interviews in the Jewish Historical Society, Winnipeg; and the Manitoba Labour Education Centre Needle Trades project, cited in the companion article in this book. For the social and political structure maintaining these economic conditions, see T. Peterson, "Manitoba," in M. Robin, ed., *Canadian Provincial Politics* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1972); D. Juteau-Lee and B. Roberts, "Ethnicity and feminity," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* (January 1981). See also Simon Berlin et al., "Decline of a union," *Canadian Dimension* (December 1977); Stanislao Carbone, "Class and sexism: a case study of Italian working class women in Winnipeg's garment industry" (unpublished paper, University of Winnipeg, May 1981); Bok-Nam Yoon, "The adjustment problems and educational needs of Korean immigrant women in the Winnipeg garment industry" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1983), 23-25.

Historical trends in capital and management are analysed by R. Hastie, "Development of the Apparel Industry in Winnipeg," in Tony Kuz, ed., *Winnipeg, 1874-1974: Progress and Prospects* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, 1974). As we show here, different conclusions can be drawn from his data. For the 1940s see the manuscript of an article by J.B. Wallace, Secretary of the Industrial Development Board of Greater Winnipeg, for the report in the *Canadian Textile Journal* of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Woollen and Knit Goods Manufacturers Association, held in Winnipeg, 16-17 October 1951, in the Winnipeg Public Library clipping files. On technological change in the 1950s, see Margaret Wray, *The Women's Outerwear Industry* (London: Duckworth, 1957), 20n., 29ff. An industry lawyer pointed to the impact of imports and the high cost of the new technology in his brief to the Swan commission: see Swan Report, 79, 136 for imports, and 133-35 for capital costs. Recent trends are reported by the federal Industry, Trade and Commerce, *Sector Task Force on the Canadian Textile and Clothing Industries* (Ottawa: no publisher given, 1978); GATT-Fly, "The textile and clothing industries in Canada: a profile" (Toronto: GATT-Fly March 1980); Barry Mullin, "Needle trade under the gun," *Winnipeg Free Press* (hereafter *WFP*), 21 April 1982; Heather Frayne, "Garment trade output soared in Depression," *WFP*, 17 September 1981; James Standing, "Sewing bright seam," *WFP*, 18 June 1980; and sources in note 19 below.

2 Wally Dennison, "Export-seeking 'super firm' group ignores industry gloom," *WFP*, 23 September 1977.

3 *Report* of the Committee on Manitoba's Economic Future, Winnipeg, 1983 (known as the Hedlin-Menzies Report) and the *Report* of the Manitoba Commission on Targets for Economic Development (Winnipeg: Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, 1969) (known as the TED Report); E. Brown, "Garment industry charts future course," Winnipeg *Tribune*, 17 November 1972; Judy Waytiuk, "Manitoba manufacturers resent sweatshop image," *WFP*, 4 April 1975; "MLA claims imported labour being used to keep wages low," *WFP*, 22 November 1979.

4 Overseas recruiting was not new. Garment workers had been brought in from the displaced persons camps of Europe in 1948. Winnipeg sportswear manufacturers in 1957 urged the import of "at least 500 experienced operators from Germany or Japan to relieve the [labour] shortage": Swan Report, 19. But previous efforts had been ad hoc. After the late 1960s, overseas recruiting became a standard part of the industry's labour practices. See also Frank Sullivan, "Fireball boss with staff ideas," Winnipeg *Tribune*, 23 April 1966; Frances Bidwell, "Firm trains girls in English, sewing," *WFP*, 5 June 1969; Judy Waytiuk, "Labor shortage major problem for Manitoba garment industry," *WFP*, 4 April 1975; Judy Waytiuk, "Fear changes on immigration," *WFP*, n.d. 1975 (n.d. indicates undated clipping from clipping files in Winnipeg Public Library); Darlene Meakin, "Tan-Jay opens [new Inkster plant]," *WFP*, 17 August 1979.

Helen Safa proposes a three-stage model of labour recruitment for the garment industry in the United States, which we would apply also to Britain and Canada: 1) reliance on native-born labour, often from rural areas, which gradually becomes scarce and more expensive; 2) use of immigrant labour, while corporate and impersonal management replaces locally run small family firms in large parts of the industry; 3) runaway shops, both to cheap labour rural areas in the United States and to overseas cheap labour zones: the export of jobs rather than the import of labour. In many instances the most skilled operations remain in the owning country, while the deskilled operations are performed by overseas workers at minimal cost. Helen Safa, "Runaway shops and female employment: the search for cheap labor," *Signs* (Winter 1981). See also North American Congress on Latin America's (NACLA) special issue, "Capital's flight: the apparel industry moves south," *Latin America and Empire Report* (March 1977). A Third World perspective is seen in "Comparative study of women workers in Asia" and "Cheap Asian female labour and the run-away shops" in *Balai: Asian Journal* (December 1981) (from Quezon City, Philippines).

5 Swan Report, 66, 68, 82-83. Also "Lots of jobs for women," *WFP*, 8 November 1958.

6 Ibid., 168.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 162-69.

9 Ibid., 66, 68, 82-83. Also "Lots of jobs for women," *WFP*, 8 November 1958.

10 For instance, the Hedlin-Menzies and TED reports.

11 The first branch plant had been opened by the Steinbergs (Monarch Overall) in Selkirk in 1943; it later shifted to St. Pierre, then Steinbach. They opened another at Portage la Prairie in the 1960s. At least ten rural plants were opened during the 1960s: Monarch and Gemini had five each. Julius Berkowitz and the Steinberg family (Monarch) had opened plants at Peguis Indian reserve, four others in Manitoba towns, and three in the east. Other manufacturers had found the magic formula by 1970. David Kaufman and Max Duboff (Silpit) now had four Winnipeg factories. Gemini now had five branch plants; with the aid of one million dollars in DREE grants, in 1978 it added another forty workers to its previous 360. In the 1970s Monarch opened branches in Brazil, Tan Jay expanded to Los Angeles, New York, Hong Kong and Taipei.

12 By the early 1970s, Indian Affairs joined DREE, Manpower, and the province in attempting to create jobs for native people. Plants had already been established on the Swan River and Peguis reserves; St. Pierre was a Métis town. But only 120 Indians had been trained in the 1960s, and few remained in the job, according to later press reports. (Some may have been in Winnipeg, a scheme that foreshadowed the Fashion Institute school.) See Judy Waytiuk, "Labor shortage major problem for Manitoba's garment industry," *WFP*, 4 April 1975; Mike Wood, "Garment industry locked in four-cornered fight," *WFP*, 4 April 1975; Heather Robertson, *Grass Roots*, (Toronto: Lorimer, 1972), 124. In addition to federal grants, in 1971 Monarch got a thirty thousand dollar yearly subsidy from the New Democratic Party (NDP) government for its Peguis plant, where twenty-four women worked at sixty-seven dollars weekly. The jobs seem to have brought some real benefit to the community, but the plant depended on continued federal-provincial subsidies: "Garment plant expansion eyed," *WFP*, 31 May 1972. On other grants for "development" of employment for native people, see James Burke, *Paper Tomahawks. From Red Tape to Red Power* (Winnipeg: Queenston, 1976), 219-34. About 120 native people were trained, then dumped. The 1969 TED Report, chapter 6, contrasted the high turnover and part-time patterns of the garment industry with women's growing full-time work in other industries.

13 Robertson, *Grass Roots*, 124, quoting a Miami municipal official.

14 Bob Hainstock, "The people motivator," *Winnipeg Tribune*, n.d., 1968. It is instructive to compare King's techniques with systems of reward and punishment employed in Third World shops, where nylons and holidays are common incentives for female workers in the "good" shops. See Rachel Grossman, "Women's place in the integrated circuit," in *Changing Role of S.E. Asian Women*, a special joint issue of *Southeast Asia Chronicle*, (January/February 1979), and *Pacific Research* (July/October 1978).

15 Ibid. See also Robertson, *Grass Roots*, 225-26 on contracting out sewing to retarded workers in the Rehab shop.

16 Robertson, *Grass Roots*, 204, 226-27, 230.

17 Wally Kroeker, "Fashion industry plans to honor veteran garment manufacturer," Winnipeg *Tribune*, 30 April 1971. Government aid also helped Winnipeg manufacturers get into the American market; Klapman became a leading member of the Manitoba Export Corporation. In 1970, after the NDP government was elected, Ottawa Liberals appointed him to British and European export missions. A new business-government alliance was developing.

For testimony of Italian women recruited at this time, see S. Carbone, "Class and sexism"; on Filipino women, see Leanor Laquian, "A study of Filipino immigration to Canada" (Ottawa: United Council of Filipino Associations of Canada, 1972); "Filipinas: 'warm body export,'" ISIS bulletin no. 14; C. Bucuhan, "An urban village; the effects of migration on Filipino garment workers in a Canadian city" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972). On working conditions in Third World factories, and the international context in which the Canadian industry operates, see Wendy Chapkis and Cynthia Enloe, eds., *Of Common Cloth: Women in the Global Textile Industry* (Washington, DC: Transnational Institute, 1983); Barbara Ehrenreich and Annette Fuentes, "Life on the global assembly line," *MS* (January 1981).

For the links between the global assembly line and the gender system, see Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, "The subordination of women and the internationalisation of factory production," in Kate Young et al., eds., *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's subordination in international perspective* (London: CSE Books, 1982). Elson and Pearson employ a similar analysis in "Nimble fingers make cheap workers: an analysis of women's employment in Third World export manufacturing," *Feminist Review* 7 (1981).

18 Judy Waytiuk, "Labour shortage major problem for Manitoba Garment industry," *WFP*, 4 April 1975. The Fashion Institute's Saul Scott quoted a Manpower estimate of 67 percent overall turnover with the Fashion Institute estimate of 20 percent to Judy Waytiuk, "Garment plant work appeals to May," *WFP*, 4 April 1975.

19 Ray Winston, of the Fashion Institute, letter to the editor, *WFP*, 29 May 1982. Cecil Rosner, "Needle trade future grim" *WFP*, 21 May 1982.

20 James Standing, "Sewing bright seam," *WFP*, 18 January 1980.

21 For the rules and how they were applied see Canada Manpower Training Programme manual "Income support for trainees," Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), EA Circular, 7 May 1979, and CEIC "Employment manual" EA 16, 1981.

22 See Sheila Arnopoulos, "Problems of immigrant women in the Canadian Labour force" (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1979); Roxana Ng and Judith Rambrez, *Immigrant Housewives* (Toronto: Immigrant Women's Centre, 1981); Participatory Research Group (Toronto), "Garments and textiles in North America," *REAP* (March 1980); GATT-Fly, "The textile and clothing industries in Canada: a profile."

23 These policies were supposed to be reformed, as suggested by CEIC *Canada Manpower Training Programme: a policy review* (September 1977). But immigrant women continued to get less access to services, as Lloyd Axworthy admitted in his "Address to the National Conference on Immigrant Women," Toronto, 21 March 1981. Axworthy confirmed the criticisms of Arnopoulos and others and said he would initiate a review and still more reforms. See *The immigrant woman in Canada: a right to recognition*, volumes 1 and 2, proceedings of the conference and recommendations, Toronto, 1981. However, see Roxana Ng and Tania Das Gupta, "Nation builders? The captive labour force of non-English speaking immigrant women," *Canadian Woman Studies* 3, no. 1 (1981). The structure of the Canadian (and for that matter the world) economy depends on cheap wages for the paid work of women, combined with the unpaid work of women. There are structural limits on the reforms that are possible, even assuming all the good will in the world. See Barbara Roberts and Danielle Juteau Lee, "Ethnicity and

femininity: d'apres nos expériences," Alison Griffith and Marguerite Cassin, "Class and ethnicity: producing the difference that counts," and Roxana Ng, "Constituting ethnic phenomenon: an account from the perspective of immigrant women," in Roberts and Juteau Lee, eds., *Ethnicity and femininity*.

24 Patricia Old, "A wide job seam," *WFP*, 19 February 1981.

25 Interview with Peter Nygard, untitled article, *Enterprise* (May/June 1980), 10. For a feminist analysis, see Angela Coyle, "Sex and skill in the organisation of the clothing industry," in Jackie West, ed., *Work, Women and the Labour Market* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). See also Andrew Zimbalist, ed., *Case Studies in Labor Process* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), especially the Louise Lamphere article. Of course, the main point is to increase management's control over the labour process, to lower costs, increase production, and increase profits. The classic work is Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); see also Michael Burawoy, "The anthropology of industrial work," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1979); Barbara Garson, *All the Livelong Day: the Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work* (New York: Penguin, 1977), especially chapter 2 and 55, 210-300.

26 For women's entrapment in dead-end jobs, see Paul Phillips and Erin Phillips, *Women and Work* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1983); Paul Phillips, "Women in the Manitoba Labour Market: a study of the changing economic role" in Henry Klassen, ed., *The Canadian West* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1977); Hugh Armstrong and Pat Armstrong, *The double ghetto: Canadian Women and the segregated work* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978); Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *A working majority. What women must do for pay* (Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1983); Pat Armstrong, *Labour pains. Women's work in crisis* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1984); Hugh Armstrong and Pat Armstrong, "The segregated participation of women in the Canadian labour force 1941-71," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* (November 1975); Linda Briskin and Lynca Yanz, eds., *Union sisters. Women in the labour movement* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1983); Edna Bonadich, "The past, present and future of split labour market theory," *Research on race and ethnic relations* 1 (1979); Bernard Bernier, "Main-d'oeuvre feminine et ethnicité dans trois usines de vêtement de Montréal," *Anthropologie et société* 3, no. 2 (1979); Bernard Bernier, Mikhael Elbaz and Gilles Lavigne, "Ethnicité et luttes de classes," *Anthropologie et sociétés* 2, no.1 (1978); S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant workers and class structure in Western Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Amrit Wilson, *Finding a voice: Asian women in Britain* (London: Virago, 1978); Alice Kessler Harris, "Stratifying by sex," in R. Edwards, M. Reich and D. Gordon, eds., *Labor market segmentation* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath, 1975); Monica Boyd, "The double negative: female immigrants in the Canadian labour force," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Denver, April 1980; Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, "The subordination of women and the internationalisation of factory production," in Kate Young et al., eds., *Of Marriage and the Market;* Wendy Chapkis and Cynthia Enloe, eds., *Of Common Cloth*. For an historical perspective, see Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979); Donald Avery, "The immigrant worker: vertical mosaic as social reality," in W. Isajiw, ed., *Identities. The impact of ethnicity in Canadian society* (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1977).

27 Darlene Meeker, "Tan Jay opens new plant," Winnipeg *Tribune*, 17 August 1979.

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